

**MARAUDERS, MUD, AND MONEY:  
THE MISAPPLICATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPLOITATION OF  
LOGISTICS DURING THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR, 1835-1839**

A Thesis

by

JOHN C. WENDT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Chair of Committee,	Lorien Foote
Committee Members,	Angela Hudson
	Jasen Castillo
Head of Department,	David Vaught

May 2018

Major Subject: History

Copyright 2018 John Wendt

## **ABSTRACT**

The Second Seminole War, fought from 1835-1842, was undoubtedly the longest, costliest conflict the United States engaged in between the American Revolution and the Civil War. From 1836 to 1839 the federal budget quadrupled appropriations of the conflict. As the war escalated in scale, many of these funds went to paying civilian claims and the supplying of Volunteer regiments with horses and gear for their short campaign contracts. This study will argue that the formation, development, and eventual exploitation of the logistical supply lines have been a critically overlooked aspect of the Second Seminole War. Using seldom-analyzed records of the Quartermaster Department, new trends emerge in the typical narratives of the war, particularly surrounding the federal government's purchase, sale, use, and abuse of horses both in and outside of the theater of war. The misapplication of horses negatively affected the operational, logistical, and financial integrity of American forces during the first campaigns of the Second Seminole War.

## **CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES**

### **Contributors Section**

#### *Part 1, faculty committee recognition*

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor Lorien Foote, and Professor Angela Hudson of the History Department, and Professor Jasen Castillo of The Bush School of Government and Public Service.

#### *Part 2, student/collaborator contributions*

All work for the thesis was completed independently by the student.

### **Funding Sources**

Graduate study was supported by the 2017 Master's Level Research Travel Grant from the History Department at Texas A&M University.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER II “A POSITIVE INJURY TO THE SERVICE”: THE MISAPPLICATION OF HORSE POWER IN THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR, 1835-1837 .....	11
Introduction .....	11
Strains During the Early Campaigns: Scott, Gaines, and Clinch (Spring 1836) .....	16
A River Too Far: Call’s Grand Cavalry Campaign .....	30
Conclusion .....	37
CHAPTER III A DAY LATE, BUT NEVER A DOLLAR SHORT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOGISITCAL SUPPORT FOR THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR, 1835-1837 .....	42
Introduction .....	42
Disjointed Development: Supplying the First Campaigns of the Second Seminole War, Spring 1836 .....	46
Credit and Command: Richard Keith Call’s Campaign, Fall 1836 .....	58
Conclusion .....	70
CHAPTER IV “IN DISREGARD OF THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES”: PROFITEERING AND FRAUD, THE CASE OF LT. COL. JOSHUA B. BRANT .....	73
Introduction .....	73
An Inconspicuous Network: Creating the Conditions for Exploitation in St. Louis .....	78
Crosman Pulls a Thread: Investigation into Brant’s Schemes .....	84

The Best Laid Plans: The Case of Joshua B. Brant .....	94
Conclusion .....	99
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION .....	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	110

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On the cold, damp, morning of December 28, 1835, one hundred and eight men in sky-blue overcoats continued their fourth day of marching from Tampa to the isolated interior post of Fort King in the territory of Florida. The infantry men marched in two files along a well-worn military road. A small contingent of officers on horseback acted as the advanced guard; to the column's rear, a team of horses pulled a wagon, another pulled a cannon. Amidst the tall grass and palmettoes the only creatures able to see the hundreds of armed figures clinging close to trees and brush would have been the horses. If they noticed they made no sign. Lt. Francis Dade, leading the column, turned in his saddle and called back to the troops that if they reached Fort King that day they would receive three days of rest for Christmas.<sup>1</sup> After traveling a few hundred meters further, the forest belched fire and smoke and struck the man down. The attack came swiftly from all angles, killing dozens in the first volley. What followed was a day long siege as the survivors used a hastily constructed fortification and the cannon to fend off a vastly superior Seminole force. Only three survived, limping back, wounded, to Fort Brooke at Tampa. Their narrative of the events sparked calls for war throughout the nation. Two months later, General Edmund P. Gaines's column found the remains of the battlefield.

---

<sup>1</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 105; Frank Laumer, *Dade's Last Command* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 180.

A hundred skeletons, many lying where they fell, slumped over the barricade and cannon, and several a hundred meters away next to their horses, in officers' regalia.<sup>2</sup> The destruction of Dade's detachment and an assassination of an Indian Agent at Fort King two days before the detachment was scheduled to arrive, acted as the primary impetus for increased American military operations in Florida.

The Second Seminole War, fought from 1835-1842 was undoubtedly the longest, costliest conflict the United States engaged in between the American Revolution and the Civil War. The destruction of Dade's detachment and assassination of Agent Wiley Thompson were merely further instances of violence between Seminoles and whites in the Northern Florida Peninsula.<sup>3</sup> Florida militia units and small contingents of federal forces campaigned frequently against Seminoles and Anti-American Creeks in Northern Peninsular Florida in 1834 and 1835.<sup>4</sup> Following the slaughter of Dade's detachment Congress allocated funds for the conflict and it quickly earned the moniker the "Florida War" as the regular army scrambled to respond to the escalating crisis. Unlike past

---

<sup>2</sup> George A McCall, John K. Mahon ed *Letters from the Frontiers* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974), 299-333.

<sup>3</sup> The Seminoles were comprised of often politically and geographically separate Indigenous populations in Florida. Given the lack of records tracking which group traveled where, I will refer to them all as Seminoles for the purpose of clarity. Hostilities between Indigenous peoples, their African allies, and Whites dates back well into Spanish Colonization. The hostilities between the American government and the Seminoles that led to the Second Seminole War began with the First Seminole War and a Filibustering expedition known as the Patriot War. For more Information on these foundational histories see: David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992); James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Patrick W. Rembert, *Aristocrat in Uniform: General Duncan L. Clinch*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), 93-111.; Mahon *Second Seminole War*, 136-140.

“Indian Wars” initial estimates of expenses for the conflict failed to anticipate how costly campaigning in Florida was. From 1836 to 1839 the Federal budget quadrupled appropriations for the conflict. As the war escalated in scale, many of these funds went to paying civilian claims and the supplying of Volunteer regiments with horses and gear for their short campaign contracts.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the war in 1842, the federal government spent between 30-40 million dollars fighting roughly 5,000 warriors at a time when the economy was teetering on collapse.<sup>6</sup>

The Seminole’s society, and by extension military strategy were fragmented, varying from group to group, scattered through some of the roughest terrain east of the Appalachian Mountains. The majority of fighting occurred in running ambushes that favored Seminole choice of ground and initiative. Seminoles frequently raided supply lines and harassed the fortified supply depots that dotted the Florida interior. Doing so allowed Seminoles to continue pressuring the federal government in hopes of a peaceful resolution in their favor, it also allowed the often starving bands to resupply and continue fighting. While there were vocal advocates in Congress, the media, and the military in favor of ceasing hostilities and giving Seminoles a reservation in Florida, the ever-escalating costs of the conflict and constant rotation of commanders made such an arrangement difficult to execute.<sup>7</sup> As the United States poured more resources, manpower, and supplies into the conflict, attrition took its toll on the mobile Seminoles.

---

<sup>5</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 325-327.

<sup>6</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 325-327.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel J. Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1821-1846* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 188-190, 202-203, 224, 232.



1836 saw a series of failed offensives against the large group of warriors formed by Osceola to destroy Dade's detachment, as it sat mostly static along the Withlacoochee River. The failures of these operations created a culture of unchecked spending as the Jackson and Van Buren Administrations grew frustrated at the cost and difficulties of the war. The spending continued to grow as the Seminoles scattered further into the southern interior of the territory, forcing the Army to construct new roads, forts, and depots to give chase. By 1842, the majority of the territory was spider-webbed by military roads, and only a small group of 300 Seminoles fought on in the dense reeds of the Everglades.

This study will argue that the formation, development, and eventual exploitation of the logistical supply lines have been a critically overlooked aspect of the Second Seminole War. Using seldom-analyzed records of the Quartermaster Department, new trends emerge in the typical narratives of the war, particularly surrounding the federal government's purchase, sale, use, and abuse of horses both in and outside of the theater of war. The misapplication of horses negatively affected the operational, logistical, and financial integrity of American forces during the first campaigns of the Second Seminole War. The use of horses in the campaigns of Winfield Scott, Edmund P. Gaines, and Richard Keith Call illustrate an escalation of spending and expansion of logistical infrastructure that within a year, was dramatically exploited by a corrupt Quartermaster from St. Louis. These chapters introduce new evidence and analysis into the traditional narrative of the Second Seminole War to showcase the fruitfulness of logistical records in studies of war and society during the antebellum period.

The operational-military aspects of the Second Seminole War have frequently come under academic scrutiny. Arguably the most exhaustive analysis of the numerous campaigns in Florida is John K. Mahon's *History of the Second Seminole War*. Mahon's meticulous approach to each commander's strategy, the political ramifications, and the human and financial cost to the conflict has yet to be matched by any other in the field.<sup>8</sup> However, aspects of military operations during the war play heavily into other works focused on professionalization of the American officer corps, arms dealing, and settler colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Other smaller works with more limited scope have also made significant use of new evidence and Indigenous studies literature to aid their analysis of military operations in Florida.<sup>10</sup> Samuel Watson in particular has identified a disparity between works on American military operations and research done on "Seminole Strategy."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the field is skewed heavily toward an American-centric point of view. This

---

<sup>8</sup> There have been several other books since Mahon's first publication in 1967 and the reprint in 1985 that have tried to match him in scope, but none have been as widely accepted as Mahon's work. For examples see: Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (New York: Shoe String Press Inc, 1979); John, and Mary Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Watson, *Peacekeepers*; David Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Laurie Clark Shire, *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny Gender and National Expansion in Florida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Joe Knetsch, *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier: Articles on the Second Seminole War 1835-1842* (Dade City Florida: Seminole Wars Foundation Press, 2008); Belko William S. ed. *America's Hundred Years War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Belko ed. *America's Hundred Years War*, 156-180.

essay's analysis of Seminole utilization of terrain and maneuvering around horse-borne units will address aspects of this disparity.

Complementing operational analysis, but with far less academic attention is the study of nineteenth-century logistics. Earl Hess, in his 2017 book *Civil War Logistics*, argued for the critical importance of historical analysis into logistical matters in conflicts. Hess defined the field as two major branches, studies of transportation and studies of supply, neither of which, he asserted, gets enough attention for their role in campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Besides Hess, few have taken up the mantle of analyzing logistics in the nineteenth-century, fewer still, during Jacksonian Indian Removal.<sup>13</sup> The field has remained a necessary element in military education and security studies, but even these tend to oscillate between classics examples of Macedonian Armies and Carthaginian Elephants, to twentieth century examples like Operation Barbarossa.<sup>14</sup> The nineteenth-

---

<sup>12</sup> Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), xi-xix.

<sup>13</sup> The majority of works on Logistics in North America analyze the British Campaigns during the American Revolution. See: Arthur Bowler, "Logistics and Operations in the American Revolution" *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays*, edited by Don Higginbotham (Santa Barbara: Praeger Press, 1978), 54-71; Matthew H. Spring, "With Zeal and With Bayonets Only" *The British Army on Campaign in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War 1775-83: A Study of British Transport Organization* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); For works that address, to a limited extent, logistics of Indian Removal in this era see: Christopher D. Haveman, *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, & Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, rev. ed. 2002); John T. Ellis *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Donald W. Engles, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978); Steve R. Waddell *United States Army Logistics: From the American Revolution to 9/11* (Santa Barbara: California,

century, despite its major military conflicts and long standing effects on military thought, remains frequently overlooked, especially on the American-side of the Atlantic. The logistics of colonization and combating Indigenous forces in particular are frequently discussed in counter insurgency literature, but has thus far neglected American Indian Removal as a field critical to its study, favoring English-African examples instead.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the logistics of the Second Seminole War have applications that affect both historical and securities-related fields. From supplying Indigenous and national forces in hostile environment, to the limitations of animal-based supply lines, to a stark reminder of the ease of corruption within Indigenous and national Quartermaster organizations, there are inroads into several aspects of counter insurgency, small wars, and historical analysis of logistics understudied in these fields.

Historical and anthropological work from the Indigenous studies field has also significantly analyzed the Second Seminole War. While the field originated in the anthropological work of John Swanton's early twentieth-century history of the "5 Civilized Tribes of the Southeast," modern scholarship has advanced considerably.<sup>16</sup>

---

ABC-Clio Press, 2010); Department of the Navy, *MCDP 4 Logistics*, (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Alexander B. Downes, "Draining the Sea by Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 9, No. 4 December 2007.; David M. Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 1. Summer 2004, 49-91.

<sup>16</sup> John Reed Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* Vol. 73. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1922); James Leitch Wright, *Creeks & Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Brent Richards Weisman, *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

New studies into the various kinship groups that made up the “Seminoles,” a Creek word, revealed the extent of Seminole society's fragmentation, and a more nuanced placement of black maroons within it.<sup>17</sup> These studies have proven to be crucial to modern political debates and legal cases regarding the status of African-American maroons and Seminole blood quantum.<sup>18</sup> Maroons and the makeup of Seminole Society are fields that military histories of the Second Seminole War continue to fail to address in any meaningful way in their analysis, often relegating the Seminoles into a simple antagonist rather than a complicated, intelligent, society at war.<sup>19</sup> However, barring small asides into Seminole warfighting rituals, ethnohistorical studies have done little to illuminate Seminole military strategy. The result leaves Indigenous studies investigations into Seminole society, culture, and beliefs a rich field that generally turns a blind eye toward the operational aspects of supplying and making war.

The following chapters are arranged to create an arc demonstrating the utility, development, and exploitation of logistical supply lines flowing into the Florida War. The first chapter details the misapplication of horse-borne Volunteers during the first campaigns of the Second Seminole War. It also discusses Seminole guerilla tactics,

---

<sup>17</sup> Weisman, *Like Beads on a String*; Kevin Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Charles H. Fairbanks, "Ethno-Archaeology of the Florida Seminole" Milanich, T. Jerald, and Proctor, Samuel eds. *Tacachale: Essays On the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia During the Historic Period*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1978); Melinda Micco, "Blood and Money: The Case of Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Indians in Oklahoma" Tiya Miles and Sharon Patricia Holland. eds. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 1-17; Belko, *America's Hundred Years War*, 161-166.

striking the under defended supply wagons, dwellings, and depots in the Florida interior. Finally, chapter one analyzes the combination of American incompetence of command paired with Seminole exploitation of the landscape. Wherever American forces met Seminoles, it was by Indigenous design, and more often than not the battlefield was divided by the Withlacoochee River, a major impediment to horse-borne operations.

The second chapter explores the relatively untouched field of logistics during the Second Seminole War, arguing that poor communication and egregious spending habits formed and solidified an adequate infrastructure of supplies during the war, much to the expense of the federal government. The chapter is a response to John Mahon's challenge to the field to explain the mysterious 30-40 million dollar price tag of the war.<sup>20</sup> Chapter two sheds light on the military-logistical side of spending, discussing difficulties with supply and transportation during the war. The acquisition and transport of horses in particular, drove dramatic increases in credit the often isolated junior Quartermasters required to keep the operations in Florida supplied. These dramatic spikes in credit, coupled with the authority to make purchases unsupervised, culminated in opportunities for fraud explored in the third chapter.

Chapter Three analyzes the Court of Inquiry and Court Martial of Lt. Col. Joshua B. Brant, the Assistant Quartermaster General stationed in St. Louis, Missouri. Brant executed at least fourteen separate schemes to steal funds from the federal government under the guise of supplying the Creek removal in Alabama, the Florida War, and Indian removal to Oklahoma. Brant sat at the perfect juncture to pursue corrupt practices, with

---

<sup>20</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 326-327.

distance from professional scrutiny, access to the major riverine highway of the Mississippi, and being a resident of St. Louis for ten years. The Lieutenant Colonel had rank, location, and connections and used them to multiply his earnings in 1837 by five times the salary of a similarly ranked officer. During an investigation by his bitter enemy, Quartermaster Capt. George Crosman, the sheer size and scope of Brant's fraudulent practices were revealed. Detailed in the court proceedings are the major horse and storehouse-related fraud schemes that Brant conducted in Alabama, Florida, and Missouri. Taken as a whole the Brant case demonstrates the multitude of ways Quartermasters, both civilian and military, exploited the resources and responsibilities given to them within this historical period.

Taken together the three chapters examine a small fragment of the extensive logistical business conducted between the United States Army, civilians, and Seminoles during 1836-1837. Understanding the functions of the Quartermaster Department provides insights into the formation of logistical lines in the disastrous first campaigns of the war, and how the excesses in supply allowed for a massive fraud to take place. In covering the application, formation, and exploitation of logistical lines of transportation and supply into Florida, this thesis adds further nuance to the traditional narrative of the expenses and events of the Second Seminole War. The work of deciphering the manifold purchases and sales of animals, equipment, and forage is a gargantuan task, but this piece begins that effort and points to further fields of fruitful study in analyzing the logistics of the Second Seminole War, and Jacksonian Indian Removal more broadly.

## CHAPTER II

# **“A POSITIVE INJURY TO THE SERVICE”: THE MISAPPLICATION OF HORSEPOWER IN THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR, 1835-1837**

## INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1841, Thomas Sidney Jesup, the Quartermaster General of the Army, received a report commissioned earlier that year. Neatly etched in its yellow pages was the comment, “On this subject I speak with confidence: for if there be one belief connected with this war, more strongly and unwaveringly fixed in my mind than any other, it is that horses...have been, instead of a benefit, a positive injury to the service.”<sup>21</sup> Colonel Henry Stanton, who was ordered to assess the effectiveness and expense of the removal operations in Florida from their inception in 1835 to 1841, was candid and unrelenting. “I believe that our failures in this vexatious war are mainly attributable to the undue reliance placed upon horse power [emphasis in original]. I believe the efficiency of our troops would be increased by the removal of every saddle from the country; a measure which would, at the same time, relieve the service of an expense which has well nigh broken down the army, and nearly exhausted the national treasury.”<sup>22</sup> To Stanton, the reports and numbers he analyzed did not lie. There were major systemic problems within the American Army’s occupation of Florida, and horses—their purchase, sale, use, and abuse—lay at the heart of it. Stanton’s

---

<sup>21</sup> Henry Stanton (HS) to Thomas Jesup (TJ) January 20, 1841 NARA, RG 92, Box 604. 7.

<sup>22</sup> HS to TJ January 20, 1841 NARA, RG 92, Box 604. 8.



excoriating report on the repeated failures of operations in Florida to capture and destroy the Seminoles offers a unique perspective on the war untainted by fear of dishonor, public censure, and failure. Stanton's work is a well-researched, often candid, critique of a larger institutional system that proved inefficient in the years that it had operated in the harsh environs of Florida.

The Second Seminole War remains an often-forgotten conflict in military history, yet from 1835-1842, it was constantly debated in urban newspapers, Congressional hearings, and small frontier towns. What drove agitation among the American public was rarely the treatment of the Seminoles themselves, but rather the seemingly endless string of military failures and the massive pecuniary expense of the affair. Over the course of the conflict, seven separate commanders assumed control of operations. All claimed small victories, each citing the defeat of a handful of Seminole warriors or burning down a smattering of dwellings deep in the interior of Florida. The war was far from the quick and glorious victory over an uncivilized foe the army envisioned.<sup>23</sup> Instead, the Second Seminole War was a long, brutal event for all those involved. The American Regular army suffered 1,466 deaths, which drained its small 7,000 man army to a mere skeleton.<sup>24</sup> The Seminoles' losses remain unknown, though estimates suggest anywhere from two to three thousand warriors were killed in combat with federal forces,

---

<sup>23</sup> Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors*, 207-208, 228-233; John Hall, "A Reckless Waste of Blood and Treasure": The Last Campaign of the Second Seminole War." Moten eds *Between War and Peace: How America Ends its Wars* (Free Press: New York, New York. 2011), 76-80.

<sup>24</sup> The Army suffered a 14% mortality rate during the conflict. Watson, *Peacekeepers*, 185.

and even more were lost to starvation and sickness while maneuvering in the interior.<sup>25</sup> Innumerable noncombatants in white and Seminole villages alike died at the hands of roving bands of warriors and mounted militia men, and even more were lost to seasonal illnesses and starvation exacerbated by near constant skirmishes and raids throughout the peninsula.<sup>26</sup>

Exponentially growing expenses and campaign failures characterized the early years of the war as some of the Regular Army's most senior and storied commanders underestimated the skills of their foes and led unsuccessful and inefficient campaigns into the interior. Winfield Scott and Edmund P. Gaines led simultaneous expeditions through the state. Scott drew on large numbers of militiamen who actively bought out markets of all subsistence, forage, and horses in the southeastern states to outfit their units. In spite of their mounts, Scott's troops moved too slowly and failed to fight any significant numbers of Seminoles, doing little but incurring expenses and casualties in their march through the territory. Gaines rushed boldly ahead only to be mired at a contested river crossing in the interior and surrounded by a superior number of Seminoles, far out of reach of his anemic supply lines. An even smaller local force led by General Duncan Lamont Clinch saved the sieged army from utter destruction. Both commanders were subsequently relieved by President Andrew Jackson, who in turn gave command to a civilian, Richard Keith Call, the Governor of Florida.

---

<sup>25</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 122-123, 225.

<sup>26</sup> Watson, *Peacekeepers*, 186-187.

Call's campaign, characterized by its almost ubiquitous reliance on horse-borne militia units, launched the subsequent fall in 1836. It was more effective at consolidating Seminoles and engaging them, but failed to do so on the Army's initiative. Instead Call's troops fought on Seminole terms, dismounted, dispersed, and disorganized in swamps, failing to destroy or capture enough warriors to end the war. By the end of 1837, the Federal government had spent nearly 1.5 million dollars on the conflict, the majority of which was divided among military expenses, horses and forage costs, and hiring steamboats to transport all of it into the territory. The major military actions during 1835-1837 accomplished little, but provided a trail of expenses which Henry Stanton followed to provide his telling assessment of the war.

Scholarship on the military operations of the Second Seminole War has remained largely understudied in military history. Since the publication of the second edition of Mahon's *History of the Second Seminole War* in 1985, few scholars have ventured to analyze the conflict beyond specialized aspects unique to it.<sup>27</sup> These works focus on topics such as the European-Indian arms trade, American purchase of bloodhounds for tracking Seminole Maroons, and daily life at various posts.<sup>28</sup> Others put forth convincing arguments that the Florida War is the only militarily significant slave revolt in American history.<sup>29</sup> Works on the U.S. military often only include military operations in Florida in

---

<sup>27</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*.

<sup>28</sup> Silverman, *Thundersticks*, 190-221, John Campbell, "The Seminoles, the "Bloodhound War," and Abolitionism, 1796-1865." *Journal Of Southern History* 72, no. 2: 259-302.; Joe Knetsch, *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier*.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Clavin, "It is a Negro, not an Indian War": Southampton, St. Domingo, and the Second Seminole War," Belko ed. *America's Hundred Years War*, 181-209.

the context of longer trends, such as the professionalization of the American officer corps and the army as an institution.<sup>30</sup> Samuel Watson has made important calls for new scholarship analyzing the Indigenous military strategy on display during the Seminole's successful guerilla campaign, however, scholars have yet to tackle this challenge.<sup>31</sup> This chapter addresses aspects of Watson's challenge, looking at the skillful employment of environmental hazards by Seminole military leaders to prevent the expedient use of horse-borne troops by the U.S. Army.<sup>32</sup>

Scholarship on military logistics ignores the development of the Quartermaster Department, and its contribution to the failed campaigns in the early years of the Second Seminole War.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the only significantly detailed discussions found on the Second Seminole War-era Quartermaster Department resides in the Army's official history of the Quartermaster Department, of which only one page is dedicated to the entirety of the seven year war.<sup>34</sup> Watson and Mahon both briefly touch on its development and shortcomings during Indian removal, but no analysis of it exists that looks specifically at the Second Seminole War.<sup>35</sup> Yet, for those involved, the logistics of this conflict were

---

<sup>30</sup> Watson, *Peacekeepers*; William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps 1784-1861*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Watson, "Seminole Strategy, 1812-1858: A Prospectus for Further Research" Belko, Ed. *America's Hundred Years War*, 155-181.

<sup>32</sup> While Watson focuses his efforts on discussing Seminole strategic motivations and goals for warfare, analyzing the Seminoles more as a nation state, I will focus more on their tactical decisions in regards to exhausting their enemies will to fight. Watson "Seminole Strategy," 159-164.

<sup>33</sup> Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army*, 181-233; Waddell, *United States Army Logistics*, 41-45; Hess, *Civil War Logistics*, 5-16.

<sup>34</sup> Risch, *Quartermaster Support*, 183.

<sup>35</sup> Watson, *Peacekeepers*, 135, 237.

both a national embarrassment and indicative of the larger failures in leadership and training.

Stanton's report acts as both a framework to better understand the shortcomings of the nineteenth-century American army's reliance on horse-borne tactics as well as a platform to offer new analysis of the early campaigns of the conflict. The campaigns of Winfield Scott, Edmund P. Gaines, Duncan Lamont Clinch, and Richard Keith Call with their horse-borne operations failed due to the brutal environment of Florida, unwillingness of volunteer units to dismount or obey, and the poor leadership and planning that left large numbers of casualties and expenses in their wake. Why then, were horses so heavily relied upon throughout the early campaigns? The returns of several Quartermasters, company commanders, and senior officers provide a wealth of perspectives that all help answer that question. Stanton's report gives the most concise analysis of the divergence of expense and effectiveness, and what may have been a cheap, useful, alternative to the horse had his suggestions been heeded by his superiors.

### **STRAINS DURING THE EARLY CAMPAIGNS: SCOTT, GAINES, AND CLINCH (SPRING 1836)**

The disjointed initial campaigns of the Second Seminole War provided several lessons about operating in Florida that that commanders acknowledged, but failed to heed as they initiated their offensives. Generals Scott, Gaines, and Clinch each responded to differing circumstances within the Northern half of the Florida Peninsula. In the northeast, Winfield Scott wrangled an influx of regulars and volunteers in

Jacksonville and Picolata and took over two months to acquire his desired strength of 5,000 men. From there, Scott advanced southwest toward the “Cove of Withlacoochee” in hopes of driving out the main body of Seminoles thought to reside there north into flatter country, where mounted volunteer units under the command of General Clinch could attack from all angles.<sup>36</sup> Clinch, in the northwest of the territory, resided at his personal plantation and built a defensive structure named “Fort Drane” near it. Throughout most of the campaign, Clinch's force, composed mostly of Georgia volunteers, lacked supplies, suffered from sickness, and remained under constant harassment by Seminoles.<sup>37</sup> To the southwest, and unbeknownst to Scott and Clinch in Tampa, Gaines and his 1,000-man regular army of the west marched north toward the centrally-located Fort King. Moving well beyond the few supply trains that could be furnished in New Orleans and Tampa, Gaines's force stumbled on the main body of Seminole belligerents and were surrounded in a seven-day siege. Clinch's meager army later saved the starving encircled force.<sup>38</sup> The initial campaigns were marked by the commander's lack of knowledge of the terrain, failures to plan for supply trains, and a reliance on insubordinate mounted volunteers.

---

<sup>36</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 142.

<sup>37</sup> Rembert, *Aristocrat in Uniform*, 93-111; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 136-140.; Michael Clark (MC) to TJ, Jan 5, 1836, National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 92, Box 607; MC to TJ February 6, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, February 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92 Box 607; MC to TJ, March 14, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, April 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>38</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 144-147; Henry Prince, Frank Laumer, ed. *Storm of Bullets a Storm of Bullets: The Diary of Lt. Henry Prince in Florida 1836-1842* (Tampa, University of Florida Press, 2008.) 22-26.

Scott's campaign from its inception set a precedent for the reliance on militia which almost immediately hampered the entire operation. Upon receiving news of the massacre of Lt. Francis Dade's Detachment on December 28, 1835, President Jackson named Winfield Scott the special commander of all forces operating in Florida. Scott's first order was to call up over 5,000 volunteers from states surrounding Florida and the territory, itself.<sup>39</sup> Despite his calls for a limited number of companies of mounted militia, several formed in the fervor for taking vengeance on the Seminoles and earning easy federal pay.<sup>40</sup>

By the end 1836's spring campaigns, South Carolina and Georgia fielded a combined thirteen companies of mounted men to add to Scott's regular infantry.<sup>41</sup> These companies scattered south on their own volition, either joining Clinch's command near Micanopy, awaiting Scott's arrival in Jacksonville and Picolata, or raiding Indigenous villages on their own.<sup>42</sup> The disorganization inherent in a patchwork, irregular army combined with poor lines of communication forced Scott to wait at Picolata, a small

---

<sup>39</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 144-145.

<sup>40</sup> S. B. Durenbury to TJ, February 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; S. Dimmock to TJ, February 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; J. Eaton, to Quartermaster General, February 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; R. Jones to TJ, May 13, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601, R. Jones to TJ, May 14, 1836 A List Embracing the Names of Officers of Militia Mustered into service in the Service of Florida. NARA, RG 92 Box 601.

<sup>41</sup> While it is nearly impossible to track down each company's muster rolls, the average militia company in Florida mirrored their regular counterpart numbering around one hundred men. R. Jones to TJ, May 14, 1836. A List Embracing the Names of Officers of Militia Mustered into service in the Service of Florida. NARA, RG 92 Box 601.

<sup>42</sup> MC to TJ, Jan 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ February 6, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, February 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92 Box 607; MC to TJ, March 14, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, April 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

depot on the St. John's River south of Jacksonville, for the entirety of February. The plan which Scott had presented to the president called for a force of 5,000 men and by early March, he only had 3,700 on hand.<sup>43</sup> As supplies piled up around Scott, the commander was unwilling to send much ahead of his force. The result was a bottleneck which forced both Gaines and Clinch's forces to languish without rations for nearly three weeks of campaigning. By the time Scott marched west in an effort to rescue the beleaguered Gaines and Clinch, their forces had met the enemy numerous times in a series of battles and ambushes.

As Scott marshalled his forces in the east, General Duncan Lamont Clinch and Governor Richard Keith Call fought a series of dismounted skirmishes amidst near constant Seminole harassment while waiting as troops filtered into the isolated post of Fort Drane. Clinch and Richard Keith Call operated for most of December 1835 against Seminoles in the northeastern part of the peninsula. There hostilities were commonplace before the war officially began in the final days of December.<sup>44</sup> Call's command was roughly 500 mounted Florida volunteers, and Clinch commanded a small 200-man detachment of regular infantry. Their actions, usually small skirmishes along unguarded trails and roads, were an early indicator of how combat with Seminoles challenged the formal military movements favored by Scott and Call. Call, in particular, favoring the speed of his mounted units, was unable to exploit their maneuverability. Each engagement forced the troops to dismount on roads or in hazardous terrain and charge

---

<sup>43</sup> Mahon *Second Seminole War*, 142.

<sup>44</sup> *Nile's Weekly Register*, XLIX, 365-70.



the dense patches of forest called “hammocks” in order to dislodge and scatter Seminole combatants.<sup>45</sup>

Seminole tactics during the first years of the conflict relied heavily on skillful utilization of terrain to their advantage. There were at least two objectives behind each major Seminole engagement with United States forces. The first was to maintain initiative in selection of battlefield and timing of their strike. During the attacks on Dade’s Detachment and Gaines’s army, Seminoles chose the terrain and timing carefully. Striking when the leadership was at the head of long columns, or when the army was navigating a major river crossing. The second major objective in their tactics was manipulating the selected battlefield to ensure the army’s inability to follow or flank once the engagement commenced. They did so by placing rivers, swamps, and hammocks between them and the army. These hazards provided cover for Seminole warriors, forced mounted units to abandon their horses—and by extension their mobility—and disrupted line of sight between U.S. forces as they waded into the dense foliage or water.

When engaged, Seminoles placed themselves beyond the reach of infantry and mounted forces by selecting rivers and swamps to retreat to or strike from. On December 31, 1835, Clinch and Call chased a large contingent of Seminoles to the mouth of the Withlacoochee River along the western Florida Coast. Marching without supply trains and with only a few days rations, they caught Seminoles crossing to the southern bank of

---

<sup>45</sup> John Bemrose, John Mahon, ed. *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966), 45-55; Louis Fleming to R.B. Gregory, December 28, 1835, Florida Historical Society.

the river.<sup>46</sup> Unprepared for a major river crossing, Clinch's small army relied on a single damaged canoe abandoned by their enemies to ferry the entire infantry force across. Call and his horse-borne command tried to swim the river, but turned back for fear of losing their mounts.<sup>47</sup> The Seminoles struck on both sides of the river from the safety of their hammocks, wounding dozens and causing most of Call's command to desert. The remaining mounted volunteers once again had to dismount and charge, after which the Seminoles eventually scattered and the remaining Americans commenced a hasty retreat back to Fort Drane.<sup>48</sup>

Matching Call in eagerness and aggression, General Edmund P. Gaines did not wait for approval of the War Department to respond to the destruction of Dade's command. Gaines and his force of roughly 1,200 infantry arrived at Fort Brooke on February 9, 1836. Gaines received orders from the War Department to withdraw and take command of forces at Camp Sabine along the Texas border. However, he ignored them and advanced north toward Fort King.<sup>49</sup> Marching with what little supplies they carried with them from New Orleans, Gaines's force paused briefly to bury the dead of Dade's command before reaching Fort King unmolested on February 22.<sup>50</sup> Finding no supplies at Fort King and the wagon trains held up by Scott in Picolata, Gaines chose to

---

<sup>46</sup> Patrick, *Aristocrat*, 101-105.

<sup>47</sup> Bemrose, *Reminiscences*, 45-55.

<sup>48</sup> Bemrose, *Reminiscences*, 45-55.

<sup>49</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 144; *Senate Document*, 244. 375-78, 381-388, 686-687; McCall, *Letters*, 299-333.

<sup>50</sup> McCall, *Letters*, 321-333; Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 9-15.

patrol south by way of Clinch's recent battlefield along the Withlacoochee River. Upon reaching the river, Gaines's force met the enemy while looking for a safe place to ford.

From February 28 to March 6, Gaines underestimated the ease of campaigning in Florida as well as the skillfulness of his enemies, as his army was encircled and nearly destroyed by a superior Seminole force. Six days after leaving Fort King, while fording the Withlacoochee River near Clinch's battlefield, mounted scouting elements received fire from the southern bank.<sup>51</sup> One witness reported that a ball from the opening salvo caught Lt. James Izard in the "inner corner of the right eye and passed out the left temple."<sup>52</sup> Gaines's force then came under fire from behind as well as it was effectively encircled by a larger Seminole force thought to number in the thousands.<sup>53</sup> The already starving army erected a breastworks—named Camp Izard for the late Lieutenant—and endured seven more days of near constant gunfire and assaults by Seminoles.

From dressing in American uniforms, to attempting to set fire to the fields around the fortifications, the Seminoles used all manner of tactics to replicate their success against Dade's men.<sup>54</sup> The majority of the action around Fort Izard took the form of scattered Seminole salvos aimed at men standing above the shoulder-high breastworks. Their smaller caliber Spanish rifles tended to inflict little damage beyond bruises at the

---

<sup>51</sup> McCall, *Letters*, 321-333; Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 15-31; "Buck" Buchanan to Robert Anderson, March 18, 1836, Library of Congress (LOC), Manuscripts, Robert Anderson Papers, Box 2 1836-1839.

<sup>52</sup> James Izard survived another five days before succumbing to his grievous wound; "Buck" Buchanan to Robert Anderson, March 18, 1836, LOC, Manuscripts, Robert Anderson Papers, Box 2 1836-1839.

<sup>53</sup> "Buck" Buchanan to Robert Anderson, March 18, 1836, LOC, Manuscripts, Robert Anderson Papers, Box 2 1836-1839.

<sup>54</sup> McCall, *Letters*, 321-333; Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 21, 24-29.

400-yard range they fired from. The Seminoles attempted several tactics to close the gap.<sup>55</sup> Lt. Henry Prince, stationed with his 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the besieged fort recorded, several of these attempts. “The Indians being dressed like regular solders, some having blue great coats, some even the forage cap...approached the 4<sup>th</sup> Infy. Front very boldly...They would run in towards the fort (Fort Izard by the by), take near the side of a tree and fire back! We were completely deceived for some moments.”<sup>56</sup> Prince reported that the disguised Seminoles made it as close as 100 meters before being recognized as imposters. The ensuing skirmish lasted two hours, with no casualties. On another occasion Seminoles set the tall grass and palmettoes near the hastily erected breastwork on fire. Soldiers frantically shoveled sand on the flames as they neared. It seemed that despite the Seminoles choice of ground, ingenuity, and manpower they were unable to press the advantage to a conclusion. Their preferred style of fighting, separating U.S. Army troops from their mounts and leading them through exhausting chases through the hammocks, did not lend well to larger scale sieges.

The besieged force, knowing how dire this situation was, made no attempts to strike out of their entrenchments, choosing instead to stay put and exchange gunfire. Gaines himself was injured taking an underpowered ball to the face and losing his two front teeth.<sup>57</sup> Lt. Henry Prince described the experience: “I am sick at my stomach, the whole camp is scented by the carcass of a horse decaying outside the lines unburied...the bullets twitter over heads like a rush of blackbirds on a fine morning.” After three days,

---

<sup>55</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 18-21; Silverman *Thundersticks*, 195, 206.

<sup>56</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> McCall, *Letters*, 331-332.

rations ran out and the beleaguered force slaughtered horses for “horsehead soup,” a meal that Prince recalled was “spoken of in some praise.”<sup>58</sup> The stalemate continued while Clinch, only thirty miles distant, awaited orders from Scott to relieve the army.<sup>59</sup>

Scott’s inaction when it came to aiding his old rival Gaines cost the army three more days of suffering. Express riders who managed to make it through Seminole lines informed Clinch and Scott of the dire situation of Gaines’s army, and within days of the siege, Clinch requested Scott’s permission to strike. Scott declined, with the excuse that Clinch did not have the stockpile to supply two armies.<sup>60</sup> Scott was not entirely wrong, as the Quartermaster at Fort Drane could scarcely feed the sick volunteers within the palisades of the fort, much less Gaines’s starving army.<sup>61</sup> Clinch again requested to move with Call’s mounted forces and strike the stationary enemy, as the days dragged on and Clinch’s scouts probing southwest to the battlefield frequently heard cannon fire.<sup>62</sup> Thanks to the concentration of Seminoles around Camp Izard, the roads between Drane and Picolata, usually fraught with ambushes, were clear and express horses made short work of the 90 mile distance.

When Scott finally ordered Clinch forward, Clinch’s armies arrived at the worst possible time, mid-parley between American and Seminole emissaries. Scott relented on

---

<sup>58</sup> Prince recorded that horses were killed by order of Gaines, where camp dogs were freely killed and their meat sold for upwards of \$5 dollars a portion.; Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 22, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 147-149.

<sup>60</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 144-149.

<sup>61</sup> MC to TJ, Jan 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ February 6, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, February 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92 Box 607.

<sup>62</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 149-151.

March 4, and Clinch's infantry and mounted volunteers arrived during the early evening of the 6th. Their timing could not have been worse. The morning of the 6th, "a squad" of Seminoles "were discovered escorting a white flag," and they wished to speak with General Gaines. Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock was sent to determine the cause of the parley, and returned "convinced that they are tired of the war & wish for peace."<sup>63</sup> The parties determined to meet later that day. Lt. Henry Prince's account claimed that "Capt. H. reports they have assented to every preposition [sic]" and during the meeting, Clinch's small army arrived.<sup>64</sup> Prince's narrative of the event paints a vivid picture, "Mounted horsemen heave in sight! Troops behind them! Waggons! Packhorse! Drove of cattle!...Oh! Bad!! Our troops fire a volley[sic] at the Indians. They kill one. Heroickally[sic] & true to their character—warrior like, they return fire."<sup>65</sup> The skirmish, accidental or intentional, was short but sent a clear message—there would be no further armistice. Clinch's reinforcements, low on supplies themselves, could do nothing to exploit their temporary surprise or advantage. Once again a river and dense hammocks precluded mounted action or safe river crossing. Prince recorded the sentiment best, "what our army will do but fall back onto Fort Drane, I do not foresee."<sup>66</sup> On March 9th, Gaines turned over command of his troops to Clinch.

---

<sup>63</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 24-25.

<sup>64</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 26.

<sup>65</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 26.

<sup>66</sup> By the end of the siege Gaines had suffered 5 killed, and 46 wounded. Seminole casualty rates were unknown, though several dead Seminoles were mutilated by volunteers. Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 27.

Meanwhile, Scott, while marching toward Drane in a “rescue operation,” realized he had little time left to reorganize his force and commence his delayed campaign. The two aging rivals met briefly at Fort Drane on March 13, exchanged a cold greeting, then Gaines departed for the Texas border and Scott made hasty preparations to capitalize on the recent contact with the Seminoles.<sup>67</sup> Scott’s forces divided into three wings: the Left commanded by Scott, the Center commanded by Clinch, and the Right commanded by the elderly General Abraham Eustice.<sup>68</sup> Their orders were to commence operations on March 25th, the Left and Center marching from Fort Drane, and the Right marching from Picolata to goad the Seminoles into combat on the Army’s terms, ideally in an open landscape where the hundreds of mounted militia men would be of use for encirclement or flanking.

As the three wings commenced their sweep south, they met incredibly harsh terrain and infrequent scattered resistance. Eustice’s forces, caught up along small trails through the interior north of Peliklakaha, lagged behind the other wings and arrived at Tampa a week later than Scott’s plan intended. Eustice’s Right wing was supposed to be the third pincer preventing the eastern route of escape for Scott’s planned decisive battle. With Eustice caught in the difficult terrain, the Seminoles divided into smaller bands to better harass Scott and Clinch’s forces on choice ground.

Scott’s men engaged in several small skirmishes with Seminole groups, but Clinch’s wing encountered the stiffest resistance. Prince, marching with Clinch’s army,

---

<sup>67</sup>Mahan, *Second Seminole War*, 150-151; Prince *Storm of Bullets*, 33.

<sup>68</sup>Mahan, *Second Seminole War*, 151.

reported one ambush along Thontlanassa Creek on the last day of March. As the force marched along the creek they encountered deep swamps, “some officers on horse attempted but could not get along. I saw one horse sink so that his face only was out of the water. The men all crossed the place through—horses left behind.”<sup>69</sup> Once the troops were separated from their mounts, Seminoles opened fire on them from a nearby hammock. Prince describes the chaos of fighting on Seminole terms. “We formed into a line firing & shouting as we ran into the scrub...before we got into the Cypress swamp when in the midst of a scratch grass pond, the grass higher than our heads—somebody said retire!,” Prince recorded in his diary that night. “We enquired where the order came from—no answer... after this we charged a tremendous hammock. On the right was the bloodiest of the fight. We pursued the Indians on their trail which was red with fresh blood nearly a mile to the river.”<sup>70</sup> These confused, disjointed running fights through dense brush characterized most skirmishes between Americans and Seminoles. The terrain and shifting lines of battle made reports of casualties for either side inaccurate. By the end of campaigning in May, Scott reported that his three wings had killed roughly sixty Seminoles and burned three empty villages.<sup>71</sup>

While Seminoles were quite adept at choosing terrain that negated the advantages of massed horsepower, insubordination from within Scott’s army compounded the problems of campaigning through central Florida. Placing aside the case of General

---

<sup>69</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 35-37.

<sup>71</sup> There is no way to know an exact Seminole casualty number for Scott’s campaign. However, none of the wings compelled Seminoles to parley the way Gaines’s offensive did. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 153.



Gaines's outright refusal to follow orders, the very volunteers that Scott relied on to see the campaign through posed as much a threat as they did a benefit. It is well documented in the literature of the early American army that regulars and militia did not often cooperate efficiently.<sup>72</sup> Stanton observed later that "no man can serve two masters" and the militia in the early campaigns in Florida exemplified this.<sup>73</sup>

During the Second Seminole War, disputes over rank, operational plans, and mobility plagued attempts at cooperation between regulars and volunteers. While Scott consolidated his forces at Fort Drane in mid-March, hundreds of mounted volunteers arrived in Tampa from Alabama. Astride horses purchased with the consent of the local Quartermaster, Major Joshua Brant, but without the approval of the War Department, the volunteers paraded through Fort Brooke.<sup>74</sup> The demonstration culminated with the civilian-turned-colonel of the Alabama regiment, popularly elected to his station, demanding that the commander of the fort stand down. Bvt. Col. William Lindsey, an officer of thirty years, refused and accused the volunteers of "licentious and disorderly conduct."<sup>75</sup> The volunteers did not take this rebuff lightly, as Quartermaster Lt. D. F. Newcomb reported: "It was proposed to remove Col. by force from his command and place one of their own officers at the head of the troops."<sup>76</sup> When talk of mutiny fizzled,

---

<sup>72</sup> For detailed analysis of Army-Volunteer relations during the antebellum period see: Watson, *Peacekeepers*; Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*.

<sup>73</sup> HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>74</sup> Joshua Brant (JB) to Thomas Cross (TC), June 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; JB to C. Clay, June 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602; JB to TC, September 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; MC to TC, March 23, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 602.

<sup>75</sup> DF Newcomb (DN) to TJ March 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607

<sup>76</sup> DN to TJ March 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607

the volunteers chose to disfigure the Colonel's horse, shaving its mane and tale, then burning the Colonel in effigy in their camp.<sup>77</sup>

Their final move of protest was to loudly venture from camp in search of Seminoles despite orders from Scott to await his arrival.<sup>78</sup> Their jaunt into the swamps around Tampa resulted in nothing but the death of several horses due to poor supplies and the men's ignorance of animal care.<sup>79</sup> Stanton, speaking from hindsight, commented on such negligence, "knowing as every man of experience must know, that horses with such riders and for such service, are not only useless, but a positive incumbrance." He continued, "This abuse of horseflesh (for a large proportion of the animals thus employed are returned to the depths broken down or otherwise disabled) cannot for the interest and credit of the service be too soon, or too strongly discontinued."<sup>80</sup>

Miscommunication, insubordination, poor geographic knowledge, and a cunning enemy curtailed any celerity the army achieved throughout the first years of campaigning in Florida. As the weather turned from temperate spring days to the unbearable heat of summer, Scott sent increasingly desperate raids out from Fort Brooke, in hopes of stumbling onto another grouping of Seminoles he could strike. No such body of Seminoles existed within the constantly shrinking range that the starving and broken horses at the Fort could manage. By mid-May 1836, Scott was recalled to Washington by Jackson to answer to a Court of Inquiry regarding the failures of his and

---

<sup>77</sup>DN to TJ March 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>78</sup>DN to TJ March 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>79</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 40-41; JB to TC, September 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601.

<sup>80</sup> HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

Gaines's campaigns. The majority of volunteer's three-to-four month contracts expired and they departed for their home states. Prince remarked that none from his 4th Infantry were sad to see the Alabama volunteers depart.<sup>81</sup>

Command of operations in Florida was, by rank, to pass to either General Clinch or General Eustice. The generals, both elderly veterans of the War of 1812, retired from the service in response. Command fell next to Quartermaster General Thomas Sidney Jesup, who promptly declined and was rewarded with an order to command operations against Creeks in Alabama. Jackson, unable to command the forces himself—though he certainly wanted to—received a letter from Richard Keith Call, Governor of Florida, asking for command.<sup>82</sup> Jackson, hoping for a quick victorious campaign that following fall, agreed to give his old political ally and Governor of Florida the opportunity.<sup>83</sup> The result mirrored Call's prior operations with Clinch, an over-reliance on horse-borne volunteers stymied in their pursuit of Seminoles by the realities of campaigning through the swamps of the Florida interior.

### **A RIVER TOO FAR: CALL'S GRAND CAVALRY CAMPAIGN**

During the summer of 1836, Florida Governor Richard Keith Call received orders from the War Department to establish a plan to end the war in Florida. To Call,

---

<sup>81</sup> Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 45.

<sup>82</sup> Andrew Jackson (AJ) to Joel Poinsett, October 1, 1837, Library of Congress, Manuscripts, Thomas Sidney Jesup Papers Box 6; Richard Keith Call (RKC) to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.; RKC to TJ September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>83</sup> RKC to AJ June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

the flaw in Scott's campaign had been the inability to move with speed and catch Seminole groups on favorable ground. He believed the only real solution to the problem of Seminole elusiveness was an all-mounted offensive.<sup>84</sup> During the summer between campaigns, heat halted all operations and sequestered the regular army in their scattered forts. Call remained in his Tallahassee home sick in bed and drawing up drafts of his grand strategy. His plan called for 2,000 horses, forage carried by packhorse to feed them for six months, and 2,000 volunteers to ride them.<sup>85</sup> This horse-borne host would divide between Tampa and Tallahassee and use a large two-pronged pincer movement in order to force the Seminoles to consolidate in central Florida. Call would command the Tallahassee-based force, and Thomas Sidney Jesup would command the Tampa side. When the two pincers met, they would strike at the supposed Seminole stronghold at the Cove of the Withlacoochee River, where a decisive cavalry battle would destroy the Seminoles and end the conflict.<sup>86</sup> Despite having witnessed his mounted volunteers break and flee under Seminole attack at the Battle of Withlacoochee half a year earlier, Call was convinced this offensive would be different.

Call's campaign suffered two major operational problems: reliance on the same mounted volunteers that had proven unreliable under Scott and the timing of the offensive's execution. These two problems, compounded by logistical issues (covered in chapter two), left Call's forces dismounted, hungry, and often disorganized. Call's

---

<sup>84</sup> RKC to AJ June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>85</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>86</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, RG 92 NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

problems with planning began in the summer of 1836, when the Governor, sequestered in Tallahassee, failed to inform leadership in the regular army of his plans. Call's plan required a massive overhaul of the infrastructure and supply depots in the interior of Florida. He called for a network of depots along the St. Johns, Withlacoochee, and Hillsborough Rivers, in addition to the construction of at least six additional fortified depots along roads between Tampa and St. Augustine. These depots, if supplied, would maintain forage enough for his two-thousand strong mounted army.<sup>87</sup> They would also provide flexibility that was paramount to pursuing Seminole who moved more swiftly on foot than Scott's infantry could. In spite of the importance of these logistical centers, Call did not send orders to construct and supply these depots, as well as the order to resupply the numbers of horses in the territory, until early September.<sup>88</sup> By time the scattered Quartermasters with authority to make purchases in the southeast got word of Call's plan, October was nearly upon them.

One benefit to Call's campaign, though not to the national treasury, was the expansion of federal funds to extend to militia purchases of horses. When Call's request for mounted volunteer regiments went out, there were two successive waves of response, the first from Tennessee and the second from southeastern states. Mounted Tennessee volunteers, contracted to fight the Creeks in Alabama, made their way to Tallahassee in late August in time to be refitted for Call's push south along the interior. Later,

---

<sup>87</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>88</sup> RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, RG 92 NARA, RG 92, Box 604; MC to TC, October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602; Charles Collins(CC) to TC, October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark and Col. Pierce from Savannah, October 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

regiments from southeastern states exploited the expanded funding of the war to outfit themselves with horses, driving up prices for army Quartermasters to exorbitant levels and opening the door for potential corruption. Despite many of these units entering Florida with horses, few left with them.<sup>89</sup>

As Call's campaign commenced in mid-September, very little went according to his proposed horse-borne plan. His army, marching with roughly 1,100 Tennesseans and pro-American Creeks, could not procure pack horses and instead traveled with wagons that proved too large for most of the trails they encountered moving south.<sup>90</sup> General Jesup was nowhere to be found as far as Call knew, and his southern force was not in position to commence any movement whatsoever.<sup>91</sup> On October 1, Call's main force reached Fort Drane, finding the fort abandoned and burned earlier that summer. Call, running low on rations and forage, was forced to wait until supplies from the depot at Gerrey's Ferry reached them.<sup>92</sup> On October 8, Call's force, now supplied for another two weeks, turned south to once again attempt a crossing of the Withlacoochee River and to enter the Cove of Withlacoochee on the southern bank where the Seminole

---

<sup>89</sup>Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 182; MC to TC, October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602; CC to TC, October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark and Col. Pierce from Savannah, October 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC November 23, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC December 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>90</sup> Mahon *Second Seminole War*, 178; Doherty, *Richard Keith Call*, 101-109; MC to TC November 23, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC December 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>91</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 168-171, 181, 185; RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>92</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 181; MC to TC December 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

stronghold was reportedly located. Upon reaching the river four days later, Call's forces met stiff Seminole resistance, and much like with Clinch and Gaines's efforts, the army was unable to cross. After almost five days of attempts, the army was nearly out of food and more importantly, forage. The horses, unable to find grazing fields in the swampy terrain around the river, starved to death. Roughly six hundred died during the march to and from the Withlacoochee.<sup>93</sup> Volunteers burned saddles in bonfires to save themselves the trouble of carrying the publicly owned equipment back on foot.<sup>94</sup> The thrust at the Seminoles was a failure and Call's beleaguered force withdrew back to Fort Drane for resupply.

The second major campaign action by Call's mounted force occurred exactly one month later and again was stymied by the Withlacoochee River. Unwilling to admit or unable to see that horses and a reliance on horse-borne action on inappropriate terrain was at the heart of his problems, Call requested an additional 500 horses from both Charleston and Savannah.<sup>95</sup> The Quartermasters were able to meet his demands, but not before the second influx of mounted volunteers arrived at Fort Drane. With fresh faces atop fresh horses, Call was eager to ride back to the swampy regions along the

---

<sup>93</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 181; *Nile's Weekly Register*; LI, 145.; MC to TC, November 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>94</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 181; *Nile's Weekly Register*; LI, 145.; MC to TC, November 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>95</sup> CC to TC October 25 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark & Col. Pierce from Savannah Fall 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; CC to TC November 1, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.; JL to TC, November 20, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

Withlacoochee to find the Seminoles again. Consequently, the day Call's force engaged the Seminoles around Wahoo Swamp, a few miles southeast of Clinch's battle ground, thousands of pounds of forage, rations, and nearly 1,000 horses sat idle at Garrey's Ferry without a location to which it could be shipped.<sup>96</sup> Call's mostly horse-borne army again marched from Fort Drane without any supply lines to the north bank of the Withlacoochee, this time crossing without resistance.

Call ordered the nearly 2,500-man force to split, one force sweeping east along the River and one heading south below it. Call's army found the Cove abandoned. The southern wing stayed on the south side of the river, and Call, commanding the eastern wing, re-crossed only to find the main body of Seminoles waiting for him in Wahoo Swamp a few miles southeast along the river. Again, Seminoles had chosen ground to the great disadvantage of mounted forces. The Tennesseans under Call's command had to dismount into waist-deep mud to charge Seminole positions. The southern wing was unable to respond to Call's engagement, and they were, like others before them, left too vulnerable crossing the river and were pinned by Seminole gunfire. Split, disorganized, and dismounted, Call's force pushed deeper into the swamp only to find the main body had escaped long before his troops could remount to give chase. Call's forces, once again starving and confounded by the river, had no choice but to withdraw.<sup>97</sup>

The failure at Wahoo Swamp cost Call his command, hundreds of thousands of dollars in horseflesh and supplies, and achieved nothing but reinforcing the Seminole

---

<sup>96</sup> MC to TC, November 18, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>97</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 181-188; Doherty, *Call*, 103-109.



strategy of separating infantry from their mounts. Not yet realizing his campaign was over, Call ordered his men to march east over sixty miles of swamp and dense forest to the depot of Volusia along Lake George. Volusia, according to Call's original plans, was supposedly stocked with forage and rations for at least thirty days.<sup>98</sup> The supplies were in fact at Garrey's Ferry, which had not received word of Call's movements—due to poor roads and broken down express horses—until days after he began the trek east.

As Call's army reached the depot in late November, it found the stores mostly empty. Supplies started reaching his army days later on December 2, the same day Call received a message notifying him that he was relieved of command by President Jackson. Jackson had issued the order nearly a month and a half earlier. The expenses for both forays along the Withlacoochee cost the Quartermaster Department hundreds of thousands of dollars in replacement horses, steamboat transit, and forage from already ballooning market prices in the southeast. Call received criticism from Congress and the regular army over the "extravagant costs," especially given that his second offensive, in mid-October, was technically not even authorized by order of the President. Jackson ordered Jesup to assume command of the operations in Florida that December. In response he resigned, but Jackson, furious at another resignation, refused to accept it.<sup>99</sup> Jesup, without recourse, assumed command of Seminole removal while Winfield Scott took charge of Creek and Cherokee Removal into 1837. Jesup would find little success in his operations, but served the longest tenure of any commander in the Florida theater.

---

<sup>98</sup> RKC to Jesup, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>99</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 189-195.

Under Jesup another regiment of regular dragoons came into service with much the same results as Call's mounted volunteers. Constantly ambushed and forced to dismount, the 2nd Dragoons did little but garner expenses and use their mounts to desert the service.<sup>100</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The first campaigns of the Second Seminole War exhibit several similarities in the employment of horses, the commanders who deployed them, and Seminole tactics to check their use. Henry Stanton, while reviewing the expenses related to horse-borne operations, complained in his report, "The department is constantly burdened with the care and expense of a considerable number [of horses]...disabled and broken down by improper usage." He discovered through Quartermaster returns that before campaigning even began, one fourth of all horses deployed were broken from escort and scouting services.<sup>101</sup> If a quarter of horses never saw the campaign trail, much less a battlefield, why were commanders in the first campaigns so insistent upon using them? Here, Stanton failed to look beyond his personal problems with militia commanders. Historian Samuel Watson is more insightful, in his comparison between American campaigns and their European counterparts. "Cavalry was virtually nonexistent either because terrain

---

<sup>100</sup> Samuel Watson, *Jackson's Sword: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1810-1821* (University Press of Kansas, 2012), 278-279; Of a review of all 313 Courts-Martial held in reference to offenses in Florida from 1835-1842, 116 were desertions. Of these 116 desertions 32 were committed by members of the 2nd Dragoons, comprising 28% of all desertions during the war. Calculations conducted by author, in reference to Records of the Judge Advocate General, Court Martial Case Files, NARA, RG 153, CC-143-DD 35, Box 86-115.

<sup>101</sup> HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

forced it to dismount (as was often the case with the Second Dragoons in Florida) or because battle commanders had little idea to use it effectively,” he argued.<sup>102</sup> Even “Winfield Scott, the army’s foremost tactician, who was certainly familiar with European cavalry employment” failed to use mounted forces in any competent manner. Commanders too frequently thought the Florida landscape and theater of war could support large scale mounted operations despite mounting proof to the contrary.

The failures during Scott and Call’s campaign characterized their inability to wield the manpower and horsepower available to them properly. Both Scott and Call had considerable pools of mounted regiments to utilize, an adequate system of logistical support, and surprisingly accurate intelligence of Seminole positions around the Withlacoochee, yet no offensive could achieve the celerity or advantageous position needed to succeed in their goals. Scholarship has criticized Scott, in particular, for being ignorant of the terrain in which he fought, leading to his slow slog south to Tampa with few engagements to show for it.<sup>103</sup> Scott’s failure to anticipate the poor condition of roads in Eustice’s wing and the resistance that met Clinch’s are fair criticisms supporting that point.

Call’s campaign, more so than Scott’s, demonstrates the accuracy of Watson’s argument regarding incompetence. Call operated in northwest Florida, less than one hundred miles from his home in Tallahassee, with large numbers of mounted volunteers only to again and again witness the same results when fighting Seminoles. When

---

<sup>102</sup> Watson, *Jackson's Sword*, 278-279

<sup>103</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 144-148.

fighting alongside Clinch and during his own two offensives, Call consistently failed to cross or anticipate contested crossings of the Withlacoochee River, where the Seminoles had foiled attack after attack, and nearly destroyed Gaines's army. Despite this knowledge, Call attempted twice to cross the river near the same spot his force was attacked the year prior. Confounding poor decisions on an operational level, Call's troops were ignorant of proper care for their federally purchased horses. They wantonly let their mounts die in massive numbers, abandoned them in charges through nearly impassable terrain, or attempted to take them through rivers while drawing lethal fire from Seminoles. In these campaigns, comparisons between the regular troops' treatment of public property like horses cannot be readily made since all regular units were infantry with only the officers mounted. Thus the Army's campaign failures rest firmly on the shoulders of the theater commanders, the untrained mounted volunteer regiments, and the successful exploitation of terrain features by Seminole warriors.

Henry Stanton concluded his scathing report with a proposed solution to the horse problem in Florida, one that allowed his Quartermaster Department to shine while taking away the primacy of militia units in campaign plans. Stanton pushed back against the rigid European-style campaigning. "Formal military movements and operations selon les regles [by the book] are considered entirely out of place in Florida," he argued. Instead, Stanton suggested warfare in Florida should "resemble hunting expeditions," where dismounted small squads of regulars were "prepared for an equal race through the swamp and hammock and over plain and prairies with our lightly armed, lightly bagged[sic] and wily adversaries." Supplying these men would be dozens of fortified

supply depots along the navigable rivers into the interior when roads could spider web out to more remote regions, eliminating the need to rely on mounted units. Stanton asserted such reorganization would eliminate the need for long baggage trains, thousands of horses, and sluggish campaign movements. If Stanton's complaints and suggestions were heeded at any level, the campaigns in the remaining two years of the war did not show it.<sup>104</sup> Instead, reliance on the 2nd Dragoons, mounted volunteers, and large formations of regulars remained popular until the final year of the war, when so much of the campaign took place over the everglades that even infantry could not move without navy flatboats.<sup>105</sup>

Stanton's report by its very existence and candid nature demonstrates the importance of the Quartermaster Department during the first campaigns of the Second Seminole War. These scattered officers were responsible for supplying the large campaigns, equipping and organizing many of the volunteer units, and enabling much of the failure and excess that took place from 1835-1837. However, this was not due to their incompetence; rather Quartermasters' were *too* responsive, and their system functioned too well given their near complete freedom to spend federal funds in pursuit of each commander's lofty demands. The following chapter will explore how the supply lines of the early campaigns of the Second Seminole War took shape, met the demands

---

<sup>104</sup>Hall, "A Reckless Waste of Blood and Treasure," 76-80.

<sup>105</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 285-304; Hall, "A Reckless Waste of Blood and Treasure," 76-80.

of the various campaigns, and spent extravagantly in the name of “immediate necessity.”<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

**CHAPER III**

**A DAY LATE, BUT NEVER A DOLLAR SHORT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF THE SECOND  
SEMINOLE WAR, 1835-1837**

**INTRODUCTION**

Two weeks after the destruction of Lt. Francis Dade's detachment outside of Fort King, Lt. Michael M. Clark sat at his writing table roughly one hundred miles northwest in Fort Drane reflecting on his situation. The fort had been selected as the rendezvous point between Generals Winfield Scott, Duncan Lamont Clinch, and General Edmund P. Gaines's separate campaigns against the Seminoles. It was located at the furthest point from any feasible route of supply. Attacked almost daily by bands of Seminoles, and plagued by outbreaks of cholera and measles, Drane was hardly an ideal depot for resupply for any army—much less three.<sup>107</sup> While most of the senior staff outside of the territory boasted to Congress and the public of a quick conclusion to the war, Clark had a different opinion. Writing to the Quartermaster General of the Army, Thomas Sidney Jesup, the young lieutenant grimly predicted "This indian war is not to be a small business."<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Michael Clark (MC) to TJ, Jan 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ February 6, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, February 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92 Box 607; MC to TJ, March 14, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, April 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>108</sup> MC to TJ, January 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

Lt. Clark was right. Both militarily and economically, the seven years of the Second Seminole War severely tested the limits of the 7,000-man regular army and its meager officer corps. The expense of the Florida war nearly eclipsed the national budget for over half its duration.<sup>109</sup> During the first three years of campaigns commanders called for over 3,000 men, most of whom were untrained mounted volunteers, to descend into Florida. By the conflict's end, over half of the regular army and roughly 10,000 militia had served at least one campaign in the unforgiving environments of Florida.<sup>110</sup> Funding a large expansion of the military and numerous unsuccessful campaigns so far from the established national infrastructure was incredibly demanding on the American economy. Adding to the complexity of funding the war, the economy suffered severely during the Panic of 1837. It was the largest economic recession the United States endured before the Great Depression, caused chiefly by President Jackson's campaign against the national bank system.<sup>111</sup> Initial requests for funding during the war hardly exceeded \$10,000, but by 1838 the federal government was appropriating over \$1.5 million of the annual budget for war time expenditures. Civilian claims for payment of requisitioned items mounted and market prices skyrocketed. By war's end in 1842, the federal government had spent anywhere between \$30-40 million, with little to show for their efforts.<sup>112</sup> Florida citizens remained convinced they were still

---

<sup>109</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 116-117, 326.

<sup>110</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 116-117, 326.

<sup>111</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 241-242.

<sup>112</sup> A total expense of the war has not been accurately defined yet in the literature. Missing claims reports, the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, and a different system of war appropriations that no longer separated the Florida War from other removal efforts instituted in 1841 all preclude accurate estimates. For the newest and most thorough



in danger, and some 300 Seminoles and maroon allies remained defiant in the northern Everglades.<sup>113</sup>

Where exactly the \$30-40 million was spent on the conflict remains elusive within the scholarship. Appropriations bills, the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, and civilian claims shed some light on the massive figure.<sup>114</sup> However, the early logistical infrastructure laid in the first campaigns of the war also contributed to the ballooning of expenses to such staggering rates in such a short period of time. Yet historians have ignored this vital topic. Besides Erna Risch's 1962 official history of the Quartermaster Department, no academic scholarship exists on the formation and development of logistics during the Second Seminole War.<sup>115</sup> John K. Mahon, arguably the foremost scholar on the conflict, claimed in 1985 that no scholar had attempted to pursue a detailed analysis of the expenses incurred during the seven years of war.<sup>116</sup> Since then, no such analysis has materialized.<sup>117</sup> For scholarship on the early American Army, other themes have taken precedence over analysis of logistics: the development of civil-

---

analysis of the Armed Occupation Act, see Laurie Clark Shire *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny Gender and National Expansion in Florida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 132-161; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 313-318, 326.

<sup>113</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 137, 164, 326.

<sup>114</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 313-318; Shire, *Threshold*, 132-161. For records of civilian claims levied against the federal government and Department of Treasury responses see: RG 92, NARA, Box 601-607.

<sup>115</sup> Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army*, 181-233.

<sup>116</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 326.

<sup>117</sup> Independent scholar Joe Knetch, has produced a staggering amount of articles helping to illuminate aspects of the costs incurred by the government. However, his work tends to be geographically limited in its scope, often focusing entirely on one town or fort rather than the larger logistical system they fit into. For examples see: Knetsch, *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier*.

military relations leading to the American Civil War, the role of the army on the frontier, and the origins of a unique “American way of war.”<sup>118</sup> Coverage of the Second Seminole War in military history has stagnated following Mahon’s history of the war in 1985, and new publications in Indigenous Studies of Seminole and maroon relations have taken the fore.<sup>119</sup>

Analyzing the early United States Army’s Quartermaster Department during the Second Seminole War through its reports and correspondence provides new insights into both the massive expenses incurred throughout the war and the logistical reasons behind the military failure to pacify the elusive Seminoles. The sources reveal important contrasts between the spring and fall campaigns of 1836.

During Winfield Scott’s and Richard Keith Call’s campaigns, poor communication, steep market prices, and difficulty attaining ship charters wracked the Quartermaster’s Department. Officers on the ground lacked the funds or authority to

---

<sup>118</sup> For examples see: John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*; Robert Marshall Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Watson, *Jackson's Sword*; Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors*; Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Russell Frank Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.)

<sup>119</sup> For important new contributions to this field see: Andrew K. Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida.” *FIU L. Rev.* 9 (2013).; Kevin Mulroy “Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Seminole Maroons” *Journal of World History* (1993) 287-305.; Wright, *Creeks & Seminoles*; James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).

solve the supply problems they encountered. During Richard Keith Call's campaign in the fall, the War Department granted Quartermasters the freedom to purchase with near-impunity. This action transformed the infrequent shipments of supplies that plagued Scott's campaign into steady—often overflowing—stream of forage and animals by order of Governor Call at great cost to the federal government. The expense of the early campaigns with their required material, manpower, and funds shocked American civilian and military leadership alike. As military failures mounted, the pressure to expand the size and scope of operations across the Florida peninsula created a unique climate of wanton spending in the name of “immediate and necessary” needs.<sup>120</sup>

#### **DISJOINTED DEVELOPMENT: SUPPLYING THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR, SPRING 1836**

Poor coordination, lack of authority, and the inability to find proper shipping charters hobbled the various quartermaster offices that struggled to keep the scattered armies and forts of Florida stocked and fed during the first campaigns of the war. The sporadic demands for fresh horses, forage, and rations precipitated two major arteries of supply flowing into distribution depots in Florida. From the east, steampackets and schooners transported supplies of all description. The vessels stopped at cities along the eastern seaboard and eventually unloaded their cargo in St. Augustine. From the coastal fort, horse-drawn wagons transported supplies to Picolata, a major Army depot along the St. John's River. Picolata acted as the largest eastern distribution point during the first

---

<sup>120</sup> HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

six months of the war, stocking caravans of wagons that trundled southwest to the scattered forts and camps in the interior. In the west, another major river aided the flow of supplies. The Mississippi facilitated easy supply lines between St. Louis, the greater Midwest, and New Orleans. New Orleans' extensive docks allowed for relatively fast, though rarely consistent, shipping to Fort Brooke just outside of Tampa, which acted as the other major terminus for the two supply arteries. From Fort Brooke supplies were loaded on to wagons and distributed into the western half of the territory. Some supplies trickled in by caravan into Tallahassee from Georgia and Alabama, but use of boats facilitated far more efficient and reliable transportation of supplies. The lack of any major port in the northwest portion of the peninsula created major supply problems for General Clinch and Governor Call when operating in that part of the territory.<sup>121</sup> The two major arteries into Florida were responsible for the majority of supplies and animals brought into the conflict; while the western branch served a grim second duty in transporting removed Indigenous peoples to New Orleans with each successive run.<sup>122</sup>

For Quartermasters, three factors drove the creation of these logistical arteries: consistency of communication, availability of ships to charter, and easy access to purchasable wagons and horses. When Quartermasters purchased anything, they required authorization. Quartermasters in the early years of the war were usually junior officers often working in tandem with a more senior supervisor who received orders

---

<sup>121</sup> In 1839, the Cedar Keys port and depot was established to fill this lack of coverage. HS to TJ, January 20, 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>122</sup> RKC to AJ, June 1836, RG 92, NARA Box 605.

from Washington or the commander in charge of the theater.<sup>123</sup> If no ranking officers were near, Quartermasters wrote to the Quartermaster General's office in Washington City for authorization and direction.<sup>124</sup> Without proper authorization the purchases made by Quartermasters-whether commissioned officers of the army, militiamen, or civilian proxies-were fraudulent and prosecuted by the Department of Treasury.<sup>125</sup> The campaigns of General Scott and Governor Richard Keith Call provide fruitful windows into the formulation, problems, and eventual solidification of two major supply arteries into the Florida War. By better understanding how these often unsupervised lines of logistics functioned, the later abuses and frauds committed by officers against the Quartermaster and Treasury Departments fit more clearly into the backdrop of wanton spending and poor decision making by commanders.

During the first six months of the war, efficient communication was seldom the reality, as poor estimates for needed funds, confusion in authority, and sheer incompetence, afflicted the coalescing supply arteries with near constant problems. The accounts of these early days recorded by junior officers stationed in cities provide a

---

<sup>123</sup> William S. Foster (WF) to Isaac Clark (IC), Undated, RG 92, NARA Box 604.; Risch, *Quartermaster*, 184-189. The majority of these junior officers retained their positions throughout the war. By 1842 there no officer acting as Quartermaster were ranked below a Captain.

<sup>124</sup> I will refer to Washington DC by the name it was commonly referred to by officers, the militia, and at times the President of the United States himself, "Washington City" to avoid unnecessary anachronism. I will do so with other areas such as Picolata, Black Creek, and Garrey's Ferry, as their locations' names have been changed, or subsumed by modern metropolitan areas.

<sup>125</sup> For examples see: Report of the Third Auditor upon Sundry Claims for Forage purchased by Territorial Qr. Master John Saw for the use of Militia whose services were assumed by the United States, August 22, 1842, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; Court-Martial of Lieutenant Colonel Joshua B. Brant, June 15, 1839, NARA, RG 153, CC 437.

window into the communication and supply problems. Lt. Michael M. Clark in Fort Drane, Lt. John L'Engle in Charleston, and Maj. Isaac Clark in New Orleans, among others, wrote frequently of their problems acting as Quartermasters during the formative days of the Second Seminole War. The letters of these officers offer a useful and often candid glimpse at the logistic support of the Florida War.

Fort Drane was located at a particularly vulnerable point on the military and logistical campaign map of Florida, positioned about one hundred miles west of Picolata, which in turn was about eighteen miles overland from St. Augustine.<sup>126</sup> At the commencement of hostilities, Fort Drane was one of the most difficult locations in the territory to keep supplied. Vast stretches of often swampy and unpatrolled roads made the overland supply runs to the fort take an unusually long eight to nine days.<sup>127</sup> Lt. Clark was ordered to take up the role of Quartermaster in the fort to support Clinch and Call's raiding operations based around Micanopy and Newansville. Clark, upon receiving his directives, acted on his own initiative to establish a section of the future supply artery from Jacksonville to Picolata by way of steam boat. He left a civilian proxy in his place as he departed for Fort Drane: "Should any US Property be shipped to this place William J.D. Hart will take charge of it, all stores should however be sent to

---

<sup>126</sup> Fort Drane sat over 150 miles from Florida's largest city of Tallahassee making supply overland impracticable. Picolata no longer exists. It is now private farm land divided among several owners. Fort Drane sits just south of Micanopy, which is roughly 12 miles south of Gainesville.

<sup>127</sup> MC to TJ, February 6, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607. Wagons in this era could travel the roughly one hundred miles in four or five days with good horses and ideal road conditions. In Florida, neither condition was consistently met.

Picolata if possible.”<sup>128</sup> Throughout the first six months of the conflict Picolata served as a critical depot on the eastern side of the St. John’s River guarding a large bridge across the deep waterway. Small schooners and most steam boats could navigate the river to penetrate deeper into the Florida interior, instead of using the docks at St. Augustine.<sup>129</sup> Because few rivers connected the coasts to the interior, Quartermasters adjusted their requisitions to facilitate long, dangerous journeys by horse-drawn wagons along roads in the unforgiving landscape of Florida.

Clark, stationed in Florida prior to the war, understood the grim state of supplies as he established his depot in Fort Drane. Upon arriving, he reported to the Quartermaster’s Department that “the resources of the country as regards forage is nearly exhausted-there is little or no fodder to be obtained.”<sup>130</sup> Clark had heard from supply trains that a “considerable number of troops have been asked for,” but no clear number or timeline were available to him.<sup>131</sup> Acting again of his own volition, Clark sent letters to Savannah and Picolata, attempting to set up consistent networks for the supply of forage and wagons to facilitate overland travel to the isolated fort.<sup>132</sup> Unbeknownst to Clark, General Scott was busy marshalling troops near Jacksonville, and the lieutenant’s letters were largely ignored in the logistical tumult.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> MC to TJ, December 31, 1835, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>129</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 279.

<sup>130</sup> MC to TJ, January 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>131</sup> MC to TJ, January 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>132</sup> While there is no evidence of the letters themselves, Clark reported in his report of January 5, 1836 that \$4,000 dollars be remitted to Lt. L’Engle in Savannah for forage costs.; MC to TJ, January 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>133</sup> MC to TJ, March 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, March 14 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

As Scott and Gaines commenced their campaigns into the interior, the lack of information provided to the officer at the proposed meeting point of Fort Drane was reflective of larger communication issues between the commanders in theater. Clark was often at a loss to predict the quantity of men coming his way, and to estimate the quantity of supplies that had actually been sent for him to store. He wrote as Scott's men marched from Georgia and northeastern Florida in January, "Col. Stanton had been directed to forward to Picolata a quantity of forage...even a probable estimate cannot be made."<sup>134</sup> The troops stationed at Fort Drane, two hundred fifty regulars and a lonely regiment of mostly sick militiamen from Georgia, "looked anxiously" for reinforcements while fighting frequent skirmishes with Seminoles sometimes as close as one mile from the palisades.<sup>135</sup> As the siege of Camp IZard thirty miles to the south grew more desperate, Clark recorded how dire the situation was at the isolated fort, "Genl Scott has not yet arrived and it is not known here when he will leave Picolata...Our means of transportation is very limited what arrangements may have been made by Genl Scott I do not know."<sup>136</sup> When Scott finally arrived at Drane on March 13 with dozens of wagons of supplies in tow, he found the fort and its Quartermaster ill-equipped to fulfill the needs of his campaign. Rather than maintaining Drane as the lynchpin in his supply lines, he redistributed the wagons between Fort Brooke (Tampa) and a newly established depot north of Picolata, Garrey's Ferry.<sup>137</sup> Scott wisely favored coastal access, as

---

<sup>134</sup>MC to TJ, January 11, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>135</sup>MC to TJ, February 6, 1836 NARA, RG 92, Box 607; MC to TJ, February, 19 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>136</sup>MC to TJ, March 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>137</sup> Scott to Clinch March 4, 1836, Congressional Serial Set *Senate Document* 224, 301.



internal depots like Drane proved to be too difficult to resupply. Governor Call chose to neglect this lesson later that year. Fort Drane was abandoned in July 1836, and subsequently burned by Seminoles as the final supply trains withdrew to Gerry's Ferry and Fort Brooke.<sup>138</sup>

Getting forage, rations, and horses to far flung forts like Drane from coastal cities presented a host of problems. While in more frequent communication with both commanders and the Quartermaster General's office in Washington, Quartermasters in larger trade hubs along the east coast and in New Orleans had to contend with the local markets and demand for boats. As logistical requirements for the campaigns in Florida mounted, markets around more established Florida cities like Tampa, St. Augustine, and Jacksonville quickly ran out of supplies for the army.<sup>139</sup> While preparing for his campaign, Scott recognized that the meager supplies around Jacksonville would not be enough, and ordered Quartermasters along the east coast to begin accruing supplies. As he was unfamiliar with the geography, successful Seminole use of terrain against horse-born operations, and the general hazards the Florida climate presented to the animals, Scott ordered large numbers of the animals and feed to be shipped to St. Augustine and Picolata.<sup>140</sup> His initial requests called for forage and horses to facilitate anywhere from 500 to 1,700 mounted troops, much to the disbelief of Quartermasters stationed in Florida. Feeding animals that eat roughly twenty pounds of grain forage a day presented

---

<sup>138</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 175.

<sup>139</sup> Winfield Scott (WS) to John L'Engle (JL) February, 12 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; Francis Newcomb to Isaac Clark March 30 1836 NARA, RG 92, Box 607; JL to TC, September 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>140</sup> WS to JL February 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604

a massive logistical problem.<sup>141</sup> Feeding the men that rode the horses was another. Lt. Francis S. Dancy wrote to General Jesup from Tallahassee, “in my arrival here I found two companies in this vicinity without a barrel of pork, and but a barrel of flour, and the nearest supplies 70 miles distant.”<sup>142</sup> These shortages dictated that any supplies for major campaign actions would need to be obtained outside of the territory. The responsibility for purchasing and shipping such large quantities of supplies fell to officers in coastal cities like Savannah and Charleston. Markets there were better stocked, but uncharted ships were not plentiful even in these busy ports.<sup>143</sup>

Savannah and Charleston played important roles in the storage, purchase, and shipment of supplies south into Florida. Given their location and port capacities, the two cities and the Quartermasters assigned to them received large amounts of federal funds to supply the war effort. This was due primarily to the significant numbers of militia mustered within the cities, and the ever-escalating calls for more horses and forage by Scott and Call in their respective campaigns. Lt. John L’Engle, the lone Quartermaster in Charleston, felt the burden of the multiple demands on his station. His initial reports for war expenses for the city were optimistic at best, ill-informed at worst. In January of 1836, L’Engle believed his request for a \$10,000 allowance was more than enough to

---

<sup>141</sup> Using the 1,700 horses estimate, assuming they were both “light” thousand pound horses and healthy, Quartermasters required over 1 million pounds of forage to keep that number of horses fed for a stretch of 30 days. This calculation does not take into account how many were draft horses or mules. That number would be difficult to accurately express given that most manifests of horses and mules were not labeled for their purposes once in theater.

<sup>142</sup> Francis S. Dancy to TJ February 10, 1836, NARA, RG 92 Box 601.

<sup>143</sup> L’Engle shipping manifests/complaining of ships in early 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

supply the militia mustering in the city as well as chartering ships to carry forage and horses.<sup>144</sup> By the following month, L'Engle was spending double his requested amount for chartering schooners and steam packets alone, the majority of which were used to transport volunteer units and their mounts. These vessels adjusted prices and often only agreed to one-time charters for rates well above the market value.<sup>145</sup> Within days of the last of seventeen vessels leaving Charleston on February 13th, General Scott requested that L'Engle make purchases of forage for the now thousands of horses operating in Florida.<sup>146</sup> Scott's order came after L'Engle had shipped over 90,000 pounds of hay to Picolata, much of which could not be stored in the depot's poorly constructed warehouses.<sup>147</sup> Charleston remained a major purchasing point throughout the war as both Scott and Richard Keith Call levied particularly large quantities of supplies from the overworked Quartermaster.

South of L'Engle, Lt. Lawrence Dimmock encountered price-gouging at the Savannah market which diminished his ability to facilitate the armies without requesting dramatically increased amounts of funds. Dimmock reported that he "placed under my charge here, 190 horses and at a great expense, corn being \$2 per bushell. And hay \$1.75

---

<sup>144</sup>The average price for a horse broken for riding or draft purposes cost \$70-100. During the Second Seminole War, prices went anywhere from \$150-300 for a single horse. JL to TJ, January 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>145</sup> Vessels chartered in Charleston For January-February 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; Horses sent to Garry's Ferry by Lt John L'Engle August 9 to November 3 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>146</sup> WS to JL February 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>147</sup> L'Engle shipping manifests/complaining of ships in early 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; JL to TJ, January 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604. Any hay unable to be stored in warehouses was left exposed to the often rainy weather in Florida, producing high levels of rot.

per hundred.”<sup>148</sup> Dimmock associated these price hikes with Scott’s calls for militia units to muster in the city. He lamented having to equip volunteer regiment officers with horses for \$2,500 at the federal government’s expense.<sup>149</sup> Compounding Dimmock’s problems were the “few steamboats” for hire in the port. Dimmock considered that if the army could not transport supplies overland it would have to accept the “extreme” rates of the local steamboat captains looking to profit from the urgency of Scott’s campaign.<sup>150</sup>

Steamboats and schooner problems were more exaggerated along the western artery of supply from New Orleans to Fort Brooke during Scott and Gaines’s campaigns. Major Isaac Clark initially met early demands for supplies following Gaines’s departure from the city only to receive reports that the articles he had shipped to Tampa were damaged. Clark had overestimated the port and depot size in the small coastal city, and as a result, supplies, primarily forage, rotted on the ships. These supply troubles and the overall cost of shipping, well over \$52,000 for February of 1836, frustrated Clark.

---

<sup>148</sup> Lt. Lawrence Dimmock (LD) to TS Jesup February 26, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601.

<sup>149</sup> Animosity between regulars and militia officers is well documented within the literature of the Early American Army. The Second Seminole War saw several instances of insubordination, and hostility between parties. Dimmock in this case commented often about the expenses Militia incurred on his operations in Savannah. See LD to TS February 26, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; R.C. Payton to TS Jesup January 27, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602. For Regular-Militia animosity see Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors*, 130, 196-197, 199-200.

<sup>150</sup> LD to TJ February 26, 1836 NARA, RG 92, Box 601; The going rate of corn in 1836 was closer to \$.75 a bushel, and hay closer to \$.25 depending on region.

Joining the army in 1812, he was a trained artillery officer, not a Quartermaster.<sup>151</sup> He wrote “I regret that a appropriate Quartermaster has not been sent to my assistance. I am compelled to be in this office the whole time therefore cannot attend to all the forts left without even a guard.”<sup>152</sup> As Scott took over operations in March of 1836, supply problems continued to plague the gulf expanse of the western artery.

The correspondence of Maj. Clark and the Quartermaster in Tampa, Lt. Francis D. Newcomb, was illustrative of the problems professional incompetence and boat shortages imposed on the western supply artery.<sup>153</sup> Lt. Newcomb at Fort Brooke was frequently frustrated by Clark’s unwillingness to ship enough vessels to Tampa following the damage to the forage in February. Newcomb was forced to act above the authority of a lieutenant and make major local purchases to supplement Clark’s inadequate shipments. Of his ship problem, Newcomb wrote “I have bought everything that there is in the harbor...and have had to make some considerable calls upon my genius” to see that Scott’s orders were filled and “as yet, he has had no occasion to complain.”<sup>154</sup> In late April following the disastrous withdrawal from Fort Drane, Scott made his demands known. “General Scott will have about 4000 men...and the supply for them for two months must be had from this post,” Newcomb wrote to Clark. He added

---

<sup>151</sup>Francis Bernard, Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903* Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 304.

<sup>152</sup> IC to TJ February 7, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>153</sup> Fort Brooke was the depot for all supplies entering Florida through Tampa. The post was build less than five miles from the docks of the small city.

<sup>154</sup> IC to TJ April 11, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; Francis Newcomb (FN) to TJ April 25. 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

in a postscript a few days later, “send me a large vessel loaded with corn and hay as there will be quite a number of horses that must remain at this post.”<sup>155</sup> Clark was able to accommodate Newcomb with the vessel, however the Major made it clear that he was constrained from future purchases by both lack of initiative on the part of senior officers, and inability to find ships. Clark wrote that he did not feel compelled to fulfill the orders of junior officers, and that he would only comply with orders from senior staff. <sup>156</sup> Of the ships, he simply wrote “they shall go when I find them.”<sup>157</sup> In a separate letter to General Jesup, Newcomb made his own opinions on the matter known, placing the failures of the entire campaign on the shoulders of the Major. Newcomb wrote, “I regret that Maj. Clark did not send me horses and waggons to meet the army here as it would have destroyed the probability of a shadow in the mind of anyone, that a different end could have been attained.”<sup>158</sup> While Newcomb may have been assigning undue blame to Clark for the failure of the war’s early campaigns, an outcome that is more correctly assigned to an over-reliance on horsepower, clearly, friction between the two officers impaired consistent supply of Fort Brooke. The issues experienced during the first months of the war along the eastern and western arteries of supply serve to demonstrate the pressure Quartermasters felt coordinating supplies with little instruction from senior officers, and even less reliable access to modes of transportation.

---

<sup>155</sup> FN to IC March 30, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>156</sup> IC to TJ April 20, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>157</sup> IC to TJ April 20, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>158</sup> FN to TJ April 11, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

Poor communication remained a staple in all campaigns within the Florida War, but the proliferation of chartered ships, expanded purchasing authority, and funds to make purchases solidified the fragmented supply arteries. As news circulated of Scott's and Gaines' combined failures in Florida, the prices for forage, ships, and rations rose exorbitantly. To civilian merchants, the Quartermaster Department, and a President in desperate need of a competent commander, the Second Seminole War was becoming a bigger "business" daily.<sup>159</sup>

### **CREDIT AND COMMAND: RICHARD KEITH CALL'S CAMPAIGN, FALL 1836**

During the summer of 1836 Florida Governor Richard Keith Call received orders from an old political ally, President Jackson, to establish a plan to end the war in Florida. Following Scott and Gaines's dismissal from operations, command in Florida was, by rank, to pass to either Generals Duncan Lamont Clinch, or Abraham Eustice. The generals, both elderly veterans of the War of 1812, retired from service in response. Command fell next to Quartermaster General Thomas Sidney Jesup, who promptly declined and was rewarded with a spiteful order to command operations against Creeks in Alabama. President Jackson, received a letter from Richard Keith Call asking for command.<sup>160</sup> Hoping for a quick victorious campaign that following fall, and furious with his senior officers, the President agreed to the unconventional arrangement.

---

<sup>159</sup> MC to TJ January 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601.

<sup>160</sup> AJ to TJ, May 20, 1836, LOC TS Jesup Papers General Correspondence 1780-1907, Box 6, 1836-1838; RKC to AJ May 8, 1836 NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

Throughout the summer of 1836, Call drew up an ambitious military strategy, reliant on thousands of mounted militia and an unrealistically large supply network to keep them fed. His plan called for 2,000 horses, forage to feed them for six months, and two thousand volunteers to ride them.<sup>161</sup> Such a host would require over seven million pounds of forage in order to stay fed. The army would muster at Tampa and Fort Drane then use a large two-pronged pincer movement to envelop the static Seminoles in central Florida. There, at the supposed Seminole stronghold in the Cove of Withlacoochee River, a decisive cavalry battle would end the conflict.<sup>162</sup> Perhaps it was Call's lack of formal officer training, or maybe it was the staggering heat of the Florida summer, but whatever the case, Call's grand cavalry strategy neglected two key logistical factors: availability of supply and timing.

Call's plan for supplying his mounted forces was easily the most ambitious logistical undertaking seen in the early half of the war. In a letter to Andrew Jackson, and a later more detailed plan sent to Thomas Sidney Jesup, Call described his proposed supply lines. He began his letter to Jackson by acknowledging the state of supplies in Florida in June 1836, writing that the large stores in Tampa under the charge of Lt. Newcomb were "almost spoiled, and the hay I am told, is laying in heaps exposed to the weather."<sup>163</sup> Call dismissed the timely use of these stores since the hay would be "entirely lost before it can be consumed."<sup>164</sup> Instead, a completely new supply of forage,

---

<sup>161</sup>RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

<sup>162</sup>RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605; RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605

<sup>163</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

<sup>164</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.



double the amount of horses, and new calls for volunteers were required.<sup>165</sup> Call disliked the sluggish nature of Winfield Scott's march against the Seminoles. To avoid a repeat of his predecessors' mistakes, Call suggested using only pack horses for carrying supplies and a tight network of depots scattered throughout the interior to keep his armies mobile and fed.<sup>166</sup> Call's proposed placement of the forts was reasonable; he suggested three large depots in the interior of Florida between Fort Brooke and Garrey's Ferry, all along rivers navigable by steamboat. The most critical of these was the post at Volusia, along the southern bend of the St. Johns River, just south of Lake George. From there, Call's troops could move southwest toward his second army in Tampa. By avoiding the roads used by Scott, Call hoped to preserve the element of surprise while catching the Seminoles in the middle.<sup>167</sup> The Governor's plan was original, daring, and—more importantly to Jackson—completely different from both Scott and Gaines's attempts at pacifying the Seminoles. However, Call was neither a strategist, nor logistician.

Call's plan suffered from two major logistical setbacks before it could be executed. His letter to Jesup on September 8, 1836 was the first detailed document the commander penned outlining the actual specifics of his plan. The Governor was frequently sick throughout the summer and as a result had only made broad claims to Jackson and Jesup about his fall campaign. By the time he recovered his health and the

---

<sup>165</sup> RKC to AJ, June 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605; RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

<sup>166</sup> RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

<sup>167</sup> RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

weather cooled, the time had come and gone for orders to go out establishing his network of depots in the interior.<sup>168</sup> Call was forced to wait for word from Washington of Jesup's and the Quartermaster Department's approval of campaign. By time proper coordination was established between Call, Jesup, and the War Department it was late September. The Governor had precious few months to accomplish his logistical and military goals before the weather turned rainy in winter.<sup>169</sup> To Call's credit, he recognized the importance of streamlining the unwieldy authorization process for Quartermaster purchases that bogged down Scott's campaign. He issued an order with his supply requests allowing Quartermasters autonomy to purchase horses and supplies at will.<sup>170</sup> Despite speeding up the acquisition process, when Call was ready to begin mobilizing forces for the campaign in Tallahassee, the majority of his proposed supply depots were either not constructed or empty. There were simply not enough horses, wagons, and labor crews in the territory to build his depot network—much less keep it supplied in readiness for two fully mounted armies.<sup>171</sup>

The two major supply lines met with mixed success in outfitting Call's grand horse-borne assault into the Florida interior. Operating under new the authority and autonomy granted by Call, eastern Quartermasters were able to freely purchase any and all supplies they individually saw as useful for the campaign. Needing only to write to

---

<sup>168</sup>JL to TC January 19, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>169</sup>CC to TC October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>170</sup>RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605; MC to TC October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; RKC to Lt. Col. Pierce, October 18, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>171</sup>MC to TC October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; JL to TC January 19, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

Washington City to report their expenses or request more credit, eastern Quartermasters flooded depots at Garrey's Ferry and St. Augustine with horses, forage, and gear.<sup>172</sup> Local markets and steamboat captains eagerly raised prices to capitalize on the redoubled purchasing efforts of Quartermasters in the east. In the west, New Orleans remained a difficult place to find boats in.<sup>173</sup> While most of Call's requests were filled, his eagerness to commence his campaign in late September of 1836 left the majority of his forage and horses in transit. Thus, most of the mounted units utilized by Call's plan left Tallahassee marching, not riding.<sup>174</sup> The Quartermasters' newfound autonomy to make purchases, combined with Call's impatient demands for horses and forage, led to constant requests for more funds in all the major supply points along the arteries. This drove both the local and federal costs for the Florida war to heights thought unfathomable at the outset of hostilities six months earlier.

Lt. John L'Engle, a twenty-five year old junior officer in Charleston, played a central role in facilitating Call's campaign, providing both the horses, and the boats to carry them, in the first weeks of October 1836. L'Engle's returns reveal how drastic the escalation in procurement was to supply Call's campaign. On September 3, L'Engle requested an allowance of \$81,000 to cover expenses from Scott's campaign and "furnish a large supply of forage, 60 horses, twelve wagons" and other horse-related gear

---

<sup>172</sup>Horses Sent to Garry's Ferry By Lt. John L'Engle Aug 9- Nov3 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; JL to TC January 19, 1837. NARA, RG 92, Box 604; Requisitions from Lt. C.O. Collins and times sent to Florida November 13, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>173</sup> RKC to TJ, September 8, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 605.

<sup>174</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 181.

for St. Augustine.<sup>175</sup> Two weeks later he informed a civilian agent in Jacksonville that “Genl Call required me to deposit at Jacksonville 75,000 Rations and forage for 2,000 horses for 30 days, you are required to have suitable store houses in readiness for their reception.”<sup>176</sup> On September 28 L’Engle requested an additional \$50,000. He added, “be prepared to remit as much more in a short time hence.”<sup>177</sup> Within a month L’Engle reported the successful shipment of 402 horses and 71 mules via ten chartered schooners and steamers to Jacksonville.<sup>178</sup> He predicted that replacements and supplies for the 2,000 horses in Florida would not slacken and requested that he be granted \$50,000 a month. L’Engle explained that much of the funds asked for would “meet demands that I know will shortly be made on me for charter of vessels and steamboats.”<sup>179</sup> L’Engle’s ability to act with authorized autonomy under Call’s command was crucial to ensuring both the desired speed and quantity of supplies heading south by boat. However, as the months mounted so too did the staggering costs for transport, labor, and storage. By November L’Engle was responsible for roughly \$181,000 in credit to dozens of horse salesmen, local merchants, and ship charters.<sup>180</sup> As a major eastern supply node, Charleston was able to support the demands of Call’s cavalry campaign. Further to the south, the egregious nature of the Governor’s campaign requisitions were more apparent.

---

<sup>175</sup> JL to TC, September 3, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>176</sup> JL to L. N. Mitchell, September 16, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>177</sup> JL to TC, September 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>178</sup> Horses sent to Garry’s Ferry by John L’Engle Aug 9-Nov 3 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>179</sup> JL to TC, November 20, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>180</sup> ANALYSIS of the Expenditures made by the Quartermaster’s Department at several Military Posts &c, in the First Quarter of the year 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 498.; L’Engle’s \$181,000 would be roughly equivalent to \$3.9 million in 2017.

Savannah's proximity to the distribution points in northern Florida provided a unique perspective into problems with funds for procurement of horses and forage to Call's Campaign. Lt. Charles O. Collins was the Quartermaster in Savannah for the massive buildup of forces and supplies. Like L'Engle, Collins was ordered in early October to aid in the procurement of hundreds of horses and forage to feed them.<sup>181</sup> Also like his northern counterpart, Collins immediately requested his credit be extended to \$50,000, writing that "no exertion shall be spared in my part to supply the wants of the army."<sup>182</sup> The next day Collins sent a second letter to Washington City. "He has requested of me 400 horses, 100 mules, 300 saddles bridles and saddlebags and forage, these are the principal things I think thirty thousand dollars in additional to that asked for yesterday is necessary" the Lieutenant commented.<sup>183</sup> Collins quickly realized that even the dramatic expansion of his line of credit was not enough to fill logistical requirements. Call's requests and the local market prices pressed Collins into a situation of constant buying with little regard for expense. He wrote a week later, "I am somewhat embarrassed now for want of funds! I have purchased more horses than I can pay for, but I am in hopes the bank will accommodate me until money is received. I fear more horses will be wanted. In that case, more than the eighty thousand that I have asked for will be required."<sup>184</sup> Collins's exasperation quickly turned to skepticism as he received news of Call's progress over the next two months.

---

<sup>181</sup> CC to TC October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>182</sup> CC to TC October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>183</sup> CC to TC October 25 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark & Col. Pierce from Savannah Fall 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>184</sup> CC to TC November 1, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

Collins's reports to Washington City reflected a key problem with the supply system setup under the Governor's command--it worked well, but not on Call's timeline. By early November Call's horse-borne force marched south through the interior of Florida toward the Withlacoochee River and the Seminole stronghold at Wahoo Swamp. The troops carried less than a month of feed and rations. His supply network in the interior was empty, and the majority of horses and forage sent in the October purchasing frenzy were still in transit. "He has not waited for his supplies, those supplies indeed which ought to have been there in September or sooner, should have been there before, [had] the Gov made a timely requisition," Collins reflected. "The vast number of horses required, is, as far as my knowledge goes, extravagantly useless- but I am only to obey orders."<sup>185</sup> Throughout October and November 1836 Collins and L'Engle sent over 1,000 horses south.<sup>186</sup> By late November news reached Collins of Call's failure to destroy the Seminoles at Wahoo Swamp. Stymied by two river crossings, his troops starving, Call ordered his force to withdraw east to Volusia where he expected rations and forage in readiness. Collins, having read dispatches sent north to Washington knew the truth of the matter. Call repeated the mistakes of his first venture south from Fort Drane in October. "There are no provisions at Volusia and if Gov. Call falls upon that place within three or four days, he will find himself in the same predicament as his last attempt," Collins wrote acting Quartermaster General Thomas Cross.<sup>187</sup> Collins

---

<sup>185</sup> CC to TC November 10, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>186</sup> Requisitions from Lt. CO Collins and times sent to Florida Nov 13, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>187</sup> Doherty, *Richard Keith Call*, 103-109; CC to TC November 21, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

explained, “there are enough supplies in Florida to last the army six months,” but none of it had arrived in Volusia.<sup>188</sup> The supplies Call needed were stored in depots at Garrey’s Ferry, also known as Fort Heilman. The experiences of Lt. Michael Clark, stationed there, sheds further light on the problems of distribution.

Shipping by boat from Charleston and Savannah ensured supplies could get to Florida in mass, but distribution of these supplies from Garrey’s Ferry remained a critical problem in October and November of 1836.<sup>189</sup> Lt. Clark was reassigned to the depot of Garrey’s Ferry after the abandonment of Fort Drane in the summer between Scott and Call’s campaigns. Upon receiving his orders to facilitate the supply of Call’s campaign in October, Clark understood the futility of the demands. He observed, “I have been in the habit of anticipating all demands that might be made on me as much as possible; but I could not foresee everything. I conceive that I should have received orders, some ten or twelve weeks before the campaign was to be opened.”<sup>190</sup> Clark, unable to make any purchases from the surrounding area, was forced to simply wait for the arrival of Collins’s and L’Engle’s shipments. As Call grew impatient, fearing the Seminoles might slip away, he ordered his forces to march from Tallahassee. Clark was well aware of how few supplies the army had received before it left. He wrote to

---

<sup>188</sup> CC to TC November 21, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Collins also requested an additional \$50,000 at this later date in the campaign bringing his total requested funds to \$210,000 for Savannah alone within October and November 1836 (a sum equivalent to 4.5 million dollars in 2017).

<sup>189</sup> Garrey’s Ferry, lay roughly 30 miles south of Jacksonville along Black Creek, a navigable tributary of the St. John’s River. Today it has been subsumed by the Jacksonville metropolitan area; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 151, 175-178.

<sup>190</sup> MC to TJ, October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

Washington City that only “about sixty of the horses & mules purchased for the expedition have arrived...No person here has as yet been able to conjecture what can be the cause of this sudden movement without waiting for the horses which were a few days since considered as being absolutely necessary.”<sup>191</sup> Clark received the remainder of the horses a week later. By then it was too late. Call’s forces commenced their march and Garrey’s Ferry was left inundated with horses and forage.

Clark attempted to fulfill Call’s vision of a network of supply points to the best of his ability, but as Volusia became the critical point in need of supply, distance and hostile action were a major hindrance. Clark was in a paradoxical position as the Quartermaster of Garrey’s Ferry. His proximity to Call’s campaign granted him fast, accurate intelligence on the status of Call’s forces withdrawing from their defeat at Wahoo Swamp to Volusia in November. However, few steamboats could divert from their charters to and from Charleston to Florida and travel further south down the river to Volusia.<sup>192</sup> Clark was forced to rely on wagons sent along narrow foot trails that ran parallel with the river, in hopes supplies could reach the southern depot before Call did.<sup>193</sup> Clark wrote of his frustration finding wagons and teams to drive them. The majority of wagons at Gerrey’s Ferry were too big for the broken and wasting horses at the depot to haul, and he could only find “but about 10 men to drive wagons.”<sup>194</sup> Hesitation among drivers stemmed from the increased ambushes along the St. Johns

---

<sup>191</sup> MC to TC, November 5, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>192</sup> MC to TC, November 23, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>193</sup> MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC November 23, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>194</sup> MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.



River. Dozens of soldiers, pro-American Creek allies, and wagons were captured in the weeks of desperate attempts to supply Volusia.<sup>195</sup> Despite problems with boats, wagons, and ambushes, Clark reported that he successfully supplied 45,000 rations for men and 26,000 rations of hay for horses to the beleaguered army by December 2, 1836.<sup>196</sup>

Despite Call's plan highlighting the western artery of supply as critical for resupply of his army, Maj. Isaac Clark again failed to produce supplies in a timely fashion. On October 16, Clark received an extensive list of requests from General Thomas Jesup. President Jackson ordered the Quartermaster General to assume command of Call's second army in Tampa Bay. Clark again balked at the expectations placed upon him.<sup>197</sup> He wrote to Thomas Cross in Washington City that "the Genl must have a very exalted opinion of my powers to perform all the services of this department."<sup>198</sup> Clark asked for a \$100,000 extension to his credit, but followed his initial request with a much longer complaint. He argued that he lacked funds, time, and boats in the port to meet Jesup's requests. He ended his report with an ultimatum: "Please send me funds and at least five assistant qr masters, or I must be relieved."<sup>199</sup> The frustrated Major was either unaware of Call's order granting Quartermasters authority to purchase at will, or was using the supply of Jesup's army as leverage to acquire and foist work on junior officer "assistants." The latter seems a more reasonable

---

<sup>195</sup> MC to TC, November 19, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC November 23, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; MC to TC December 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>196</sup> MC to TC, December 2, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>197</sup> TJ to IC, October 16 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>198</sup> IC to TC October 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>199</sup> IC to TC October 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

explanation as Quartermaster work was considered beneath more senior officers.<sup>200</sup>

Clark's incompetence went unpunished and largely unnoticed by the Quartermaster's Department as Call's starving army garnered more funds and attention. The failures at New Orleans serves to showcase the effectiveness of the junior officers in the east managing funds, supplies, and shipping without assistants or even ranking supervision.

In the months following Call's failed campaign, the Governor attempted to shift blame away from himself and onto the Quartermaster Department for the supply shortages of his army. More specifically, he targeted Lt. John L'Engle operating in Charleston.<sup>201</sup> Call alleged that he could not complete the campaign because L'Engle failed to fulfill his orders for the supply of the 2,000 horses and forage required to feed them. Call accused L'Engle of being "one of many officers who were unwilling to acknowledge [my] authority to command them and were determined to throw every embarrassment in [my] way."<sup>202</sup> L'Engle submitted several signed testimonies from Charleston and the manifests of the seven boats he chartered to demonstrate that he successfully shipped over half a million pounds of forage to Florida from September to November 1836.<sup>203</sup> When unable to send supplies in late October due to cholera in the city, L'Engle coordinated with Collins in Savannah to see that shipments were fulfilled.<sup>204</sup> L'Engle's evidence, paired with returns sent to Washington City throughout

---

<sup>200</sup> WF to IC Nov. 9 1836. NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Watson, *Peacekeepers*, 455.

<sup>201</sup> JL to TC January 19, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>202</sup> JL to TC January 19, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>203</sup> L'Engle shipping manifests/complaining of ships in early 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.; JL to TJ, January 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>204</sup> L'Engle shipping manifests/complaining of ships in early 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.; JL to TJ, January 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

Call's campaign, suggests that if there was anyone to blame for the failure in the fall of 1836, it was Call himself.

## CONCLUSION

If the first three campaigns of the Second Seminole War proved anything to leaders in Washington City, it was that poor leadership, reliance on horse-borne campaigns, and logistics were intimately intertwined and at the root of the repeated failures. After coldly relieving Call from command, Jackson turned over control of the massively expensive conflict to General Thomas Sidney Jesup, the former Quartermaster General of the army.<sup>205</sup> Jesup assumed command of a tightly knit eastern supply line with competent officers willing to act under orders and with initiative to see requests fulfilled. The western artery remained problematic, as Isaac Clark was neither relieved, nor did he receive his five assistants. He remained Quartermaster in New Orleans until his death in 1842.<sup>206</sup> Jesup's next two campaigns against the Seminoles benefited from additional Congressional appropriations and bills that granted the federal payment of claims made by militia and civilians for horses purchased by the army.<sup>207</sup> This new freedom gave Quartermasters both in Florida and in neighboring states further

---

<sup>205</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 191-193.

<sup>206</sup> Heitman, *Register*, 304.; ANALYSIS of the Expenditures made by the Quarter Master's Department at several Military Posts &c, in the Second Quarter of the year 1842, NARA, RG 92, Box 498.

<sup>207</sup> War Department Circular on Payment of Claims, January 18, 1837, NARA, RG 92, Box 606.

opportunities to procure animals and supplies. One of the unforeseen consequences of such freedom was the potential for corruption.

Plagued by poor communication and localized troubles with markets, the supply lines flowing into the Florida War grew in fits and bursts. The major stimulant that allowed the disjointed lines to strengthen into a more effective delivery system was the near-impunity Quartermasters experienced in spending and extending their lines of credit under Call's command. Lack of cash, or reaching credit limits with local banks occasionally prevented Quartermasters from making purchases.<sup>208</sup> However, more often than not Quartermasters had access to a nearly unlimited line of credit, and after Call's Campaign, they possessed the authority to use it with little repercussion. The precedent to "spare no exertion in the supply of the army," particularly among the eastern Quartermasters, held for the remainder of the war.<sup>209</sup> Corruption was a costly consequence. Thousands of fraudulent claims and one major court martial of a ranking Quartermaster proved that not every purchase was made with the public good in mind.

This chapter has been the first study of the logistics behind the extravagant expense of the Second Seminole War. The campaigns of Gaines, Scott, and Call help illustrate much of the early funding and supply infrastructure, and work toward fully answering Mahon's call for an understanding of this aspect of the conflict. In order to

---

<sup>208</sup>Col. K. L. Baldwin to TJ, October 18, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; CC to TC, November 1, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; RKC to TC December 11, 1837, NARAN, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>209</sup>ANALYSIS of the Expenditures made by the Quarter Master's Department at several Military Posts &c, RG 92, Box 498. These ledgers provide names and itemized expenditures of Quartermasters by post from 1835-1842. Analysis of this shows the trend for the Eastern supply line to spend more than west remained consistent after 1836.

fully explain the logistical costs of the war, it is necessary to explore another understudied aspect of the conflict, the degree to which Quartermasters utilized much of their freedom to spend for their personal benefit. The next chapter will explore the way in which corruption, fraud, and abuse of authority added to the drastically escalating expense of the Second Seminole War.

## CHAPTER IV

### “IN DISREGARD OF THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES”:

#### PROFITEERING AND FRAUD, THE CASE OF LT. COL. JOSHUA B. BRANT

##### INTRODUCTION

It was June in St. Louis, when a group of men dressed in their powder blue uniforms and officer's regalia sat in a small stifling courtroom commandeered to serve their purposes.<sup>210</sup> Before them sat accused and accuser, both officers of the United States Army, both trained as Quartermasters. Captain William Hart, the Judge Advocate, stood and commenced the proceedings, reading the charges brought against the accused: Fraud against the United States Government with fourteen specifications, Violation of Official Trust and Neglect of Duty on seven specifications, and Conduct Unbecoming of an Officer and a Gentleman on two specifications.<sup>211</sup> The accused had allegedly embezzled nearly five times the annual salary of a field-grade officer, some \$6,104, in only nine months' time.<sup>212</sup> Lt. Col. Joshua Brant was no doubt unsurprised by the charges brought against him. He and his accuser, Maj. George H. Crosman, had been

---

<sup>210</sup> Proceedings of a General Court Martial in the Case of Lieutenant Colonel Joshua B. Brant Deputy Qr. Master General (Brant CTM.) NARA, RG 153, CC-437A, Box 105, 1-4.

<sup>211</sup> Charges in a Court-martial identified which article of war the soldier had violated, specifications explained the details of criminal act committed; Henry Coppee, *Field Manual of Courts-martial, Containing the Forms and Proceeding, of All Kinds of Courts-martial, and an Explanation of the Duties of all Persons Connected with Military Tribunals, In Any Capacity* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1863), 19-20; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC-437A, Box 105, Appendix A, 1-25.

<sup>212</sup> \$6,104 in 1837 translates to \$131,785.36 in 2017, however this is only what Brant was accused of for the year of 1837, in reality the number may be much higher.

engaged in legal battle for the past six months in a military Court of Inquiry investigating the actions taken by Brant during the summer of 1837. The Court Martial that began on June 15, 1839 was merely the next step in assessing the allegations Crosman brought against Brant. The case took another six months and over a thousand pages of written testimony to conclude, but Crosman's investigations, Brant's schemes, and the proceedings of the court case provide new insights into gross government overspending during the Second Seminole War, and those who sought to exploit the opportunity.

Scholarship of military corruption within the Quartermaster's Department during the nineteenth-century, particularly the antebellum era, does not exist in any real form. While several scholars have tackled civilian profiteering off of Jacksonian Indian Removal policies, particularly during Creek and Cherokee removal, there has been little exploration into military cases of fraud.<sup>213</sup> As a result, the majority of the already scant scholarship regarding nineteenth-century military logistics remains focused principally on European conflict and the transportation of supplies during the American Civil War.<sup>214</sup> Investigations into the development of the professionalized American officer

---

<sup>213</sup>Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*; Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*; Ellisor, *The Second Creek War*.

<sup>214</sup> For some of the staples in the field of Logistics see: Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775-1783* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); James A. Huston, *Logistics of Liberty: American Services of Supply in the Revolutionary War and After* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1991); John A. Lynn, "The history of logistics and supplying war," *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1993): 9-30; Earl J. Hess, *Civil War*

corps during the antebellum period offer some useful insight into how officers interpreted the Panic of 1837 and the effect it had on their career prospects. William Skeleton identified an unprecedented spike in resignations from the officer corps in 1837, but does not comment on other, less than legal, ways officers may have circumvented their low pay in the years immediately following the panic. Finally, the few histories that touch on the antebellum Quartermaster's Department in this era focus their analysis strictly on the Florida War with its major employment of wagons and expenses therein.<sup>215</sup> None have cast their lenses west to include the historic French fur trading town of St. Louis as a critical site in the supply and exploitation of the war effort. This chapter seeks to address these historiographical gaps by investigating the Case of Joshua Brant and his place within the larger context of American Quartermasters, Indian Removal, and supplying the antebellum army.

St. Louis's proximity to the Mississippi River and its remoteness from eastern cities and infrastructure provided an excellent location to perpetuate mass fraud during the Second Seminole War. By 1837, the Quartermaster Department was actively purchasing goods and supplies, namely forage, horses, and wagons, from nearly every major city in the United States. Quartermasters in cities along the Eastern Seaboard and

---

*Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: State University Press, 2017), 5-16.

<sup>215</sup> The scant literature that addresses Second Seminole War Logistics devotes no more than 1 to 4 pages to the conflict. See: Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army*, 181-233; Waddell, *United States Army Logistics*, 41-45.



the Mississippi River were especially heavy spenders.<sup>216</sup> Due to the disproportionately large demands for cash and credit in cities like Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans, the Treasury Department quickly involved itself in investigating fraudulent claims made by civilians against the Government. The Treasury Department rarely investigated Quartermasters given that few had personal ties to the cities they were stationed in. While the Army Quartermaster returns were often substantially larger than civilian claims, the sheer volume of civilian and militia claim inundated the Third Auditor of the Treasury's office until well after the war ended.<sup>217</sup> With the constant demand for supplies in Florida, the relatively low rank of Quartermasters, and official scrutiny on ledger books, it seemed unlikely that southeastern Quartermasters would have the time, rank, or skill to execute a successful fraud scheme. However, for a higher ranking Quartermaster hundreds of miles from Florida and Treasury Department auditors, stationed in his hometown of over ten years, circumstances and opportunities were much different.<sup>218</sup> St. Louis was not a large city compared to its eastern counterparts, but its location made it a necessary purchasing point for supplies for both ends of Indian

---

<sup>216</sup> MC to TC, October 12, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602; CC to TC, October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark and Col. Pierce from Savannah, October 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.

<sup>217</sup> The Third Auditor of the Treasury, Peter Hagner and his staff, became involved with investigating claims made against the government in 1837 and was still reimbursing or denying claims as late as 1851. Much of this was due to incomplete paper work, the delay in mailing correspondence, and the difficulty finding and soliciting volunteers who came from all over the Southeast to serve in Florida. Much of the Third Auditor's paperwork is intermixed with the consolidated correspondence of the Quartermaster General, NARA, RG 92, Boxes 601-607.

<sup>218</sup> Lieut. Col. Joshua B. Brant Deputy Quartermaster General Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry in his case held at St. Louis, MO. Pursuant to General Orders No. 43. Of 1838. C. (Brant CTI), NARA, RG 153, CC-433½, Box 105, 4-6.

removal.<sup>219</sup> Quartermasters stationed there were responsible for acquiring horses, camp supplies, feed, and rations for the Army and removed persons alike; they shipped supplies west to Oklahoma and south to New Orleans to be ferried to Florida.<sup>220</sup> This positioning at the midpoint of the removal operations granted Quartermasters in St. Louis nearly the same freedom of spending as their Southeastern counterparts, but with significantly less supervision.

When taken against the larger backdrop of massive government financial waste during the Second Seminole War, the economic recession in 1837, and small size of the officer corps, the ease with which a well-connected and determined officer could perpetuate a large-scale fraud increased precipitously the further from the Southeast said officer went. As Quartermasters in the Southeast received more and more autonomy and authority following Richard Keith Call's disastrous campaign, the pattern carried forth to peripheral cities like St. Louis where Lt. Col. Joshua Brant, then a Major, used personal ties, unsupervised credit, and rank to establish and perpetuate several highly successful fraud schemes against the federal government, embezzling nearly five times his annual salary in nine months.

---

<sup>219</sup> St. Louis grew in population from roughly 6,000 to 16,000 between 1830-1840. St. Louis City Plan Commission- 1969, "Physical Growth of the City of Saint Louis" <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/archive/history-physical-growth-stlouis/#boom>.

<sup>220</sup> IC to TJ, February 7, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; IC to TJ, February 7, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17-21, 37, 51.

## **AN INCONSPICUOUS NETWORK: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR EXPLOITATION IN ST. LOUIS**

In 1837, St. Louis remained an important juncture for the shipment of government supplies despite the economic issues brewing in the east. While Jackson's "pet banks" collapsed and credit ballooned in the east, the growing riverside city was lively with economic interactions.<sup>221</sup> Steamboats stopped along the city's many docks night and day. Dozens of brick store houses sprung up along the riverside to accommodate the large amount of crops and lumber shipped south from newly established towns in Illinois. Livery stables made handsome profits buying horses from rural breeders and selling them downriver both to support the war effort and to private buyers.<sup>222</sup> Amidst the bustle of daily transactions, Major Joshua Brant was tasked with supplying everything from horses for Dragoon regiments, to tents for removed Southeastern Indigenous peoples. The small city was an important purchasing point for horses along the western supply artery going into the Florida War, and while Brant did not report his activities as frequently as his Southeastern counterparts, his ledger books show a wide scope of responsibilities, most of which were legal.<sup>223</sup>

Maj. Joshua Brant lived in St. Louis from 1830 to his death in 1861. Considering his twenty-four year long tenure in the Quartermaster Department and knowledge of the region, he was clearly the best man for the job of Deputy

---

<sup>221</sup> William J. Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, (Iowa City, Iowa: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1968); Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 737-740.

<sup>222</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 152, 166-168, 187, 249.

<sup>223</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 737-740.

Quartermaster General in the city.<sup>224</sup> His 1838 letter of defense during the Court of Inquiry into his actions laid out many of his achievements and skills as Quartermaster. Enlisting in the army in 1812, Brant saw action on the Niagara Campaign, and received a brevet to the rank of 1st Lieutenant.<sup>225</sup> After the war Brant was given the assignment of Quartermaster, a task he found particularly fitting for his skills. He wrote, “while serving in the Quarter Master’s Department I have often been called upon to perform extra arduous, and highly important services.” He listed his disbursement of claims during the “Winnebago Disturbances” in 1827, aiding in supplying General Atkinson during the Black Hawk War in Wisconsin Territory in 1832, and serving as liaison between Alabama militia units and pro-American Creeks during Creek removal in 1836.<sup>226</sup> In all, Brant claimed he had disbursed “more than 2 ½ millions of dollars: the whole of which amount has been truly accounted for without deflation or loss.”<sup>227</sup> Brant was unique in his pride of the station; most officers of similar rank like Maj. Isaac Clarke in New Orleans, or Col. William Foster, shunned the duty. These officers often sought opportunities to foist the tedious work of ledgers and receipts onto younger officers.<sup>228</sup> Brant, however, enjoyed his station and responsibilities in Missouri. His rank of Major made him the highest ranking officer in the small city, giving him near

---

<sup>224</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 4.

<sup>225</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 3-6.

<sup>226</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 4; Joshua Brant (JB) to Thomas Cross (TC), June 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; JB to C. Clay, June 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602; JB to TC, September 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601.

<sup>227</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 4.

<sup>228</sup> WF to IC Nov. 9 1836. NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Watson, *Peacekeepers*, 455.

impunity over his small staff of clerks and subordinates.<sup>229</sup> His station and rank also came with job security, allowing him to purchase a considerable plot of land just outside St. Louis where he maintained horse pastures and a small acreage of corn.<sup>230</sup> Finally, the position let him remain close to his family, friends, and most importantly, business associates who aided him in a series of “petty speculations...so trivial in their aggregate amount as not to present the slightest temptation to any man of independent pecuniary means.”<sup>231</sup> Brant’s training, rank, personal property, and local ties all contributed to his complete control of Quartermaster functions in the city of St. Louis and allowed him to create several successful instances of fraud against the federal government.

Over the course of the seven years Brant lived in St. Louis he actively established an infrastructure of business ties and property ownership that aided his later schemes against the federal government. From purchasing store houses under false names, to opening bank accounts under the names of his associates, Brant was able to manipulate his knowledge of the city and the funds at his discretion as a Quartermaster to create his fraudulent networks. Over the years of 1835-1838 Brant opened at least seven accounts for goods sold to the United States Government in the names of his associates. On Brant’s ledgers, John Darnielle, and William Dowler, sold horses, canoes, and camp goods, to the government. The real Darnielle and Dowler had no knowledge of such transactions.<sup>232</sup> In July 1830, Brant signed a deed to two connected store houses with an

---

<sup>229</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 57.

<sup>230</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 39-48.

<sup>231</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 5.

<sup>232</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC-437A, Box 105, Appendix A.

associate named John Goodfellow and his wife on the corner of Second and Laurel streets for \$600.<sup>233</sup> The storehouses, one brick, one wood, were less than a city block away from the river, but several blocks from the established steamboat docks, further to the south.<sup>234</sup> While it is conceivable that Brant and Goodfellow initially purchased these buildings for legitimate business purposes in 1830, the ledgers of Brant's purchases as Quartermaster in the city from 1829-1838 demonstrate these store houses were frequently used for government storage.<sup>235</sup> By 1835, Brant presided over a small network of associates, accounts, and properties, all that he needed was permission from the government to increase his budget and spending. That opportunity came with the drastic escalation in national spending following Winfield Scott and Richard Keith Call's campaigns against the Seminoles in 1836.

Between the years of 1835 and 1839 Brant fulfilled his Quartermaster roles in three states and presided over the purchase, transport, and disbursement of hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of animals and goods. In May of 1835, Brant abruptly began renting his storehouses to a V. W. Shepard.<sup>236</sup> Brant's Quartermaster returns listed the building as a hired store house for an annual rent of \$1,000 paid to Shepard. It is not known if Shepard was a living associate of Brant or an alias, as Brant was the chief officer in charge of dispersing checks, but as 1836 and 1837 came and went the store

---

<sup>233</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC-437A, Box 105, Appendix N.

<sup>234</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433 ½, Box 105, 8, 39, Appendix C 23-25; As of 2017, The plot of land in question is on the northern end of Gateway Arch Park, underneath the Eads Bridge.

<sup>235</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433 ½, Box 105, 737-739.

<sup>236</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17-18.

house was utilized in at least two major fraud schemes while collecting monthly rent checks from the federal government.<sup>237</sup> During 1836 and 1837 Brant was given orders to travel to Montgomery, Alabama to outfit Volunteer units as well as supply Creeks working with the military with weapons and gear.<sup>238</sup> During 1836, Brant traveled frequently between Missouri and Alabama while maintaining his business ties and infrastructure of fraudulent names and properties.<sup>239</sup> While in Alabama, he used his rank to garner a large line of credit in Montgomery, over \$110,000, for outfitting Alabama's notorious mounted volunteer regiments, the same that nearly mutinied in Tampa in 1836.<sup>240</sup> He then received permission from acting Quartermaster General Thomas Cross to disburse payments for that line of credit upon his return to St. Louis.<sup>241</sup> However, before he could incorporate this massive amount of credit into his already brewing schemes, he was ordered to Florida to cover for Quartermaster Col. Francis Lane, who in "fevered confusion" drove a saber through his eye.<sup>242</sup>

Brant's abrupt reassignment to Florida, from October 1837 to June 1838, left his network vulnerable when a replacement Quartermaster was assigned in St. Louis,

---

<sup>237</sup> V.W. Shepard did not attend court as a witness, nor provide testimony like the majority of Brant's other aliases. It is likely the name was simply made up and existed only on Government returns; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17-19.

<sup>238</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17.

<sup>239</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 16-20; Joshua Brant (JB) to Thomas Cross (TC) June, 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; JB to TC September 29, NARA, RG 92, Box 601; Copy of Letter from JB to C.C. Clay, June 29, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602.

<sup>240</sup> DN to TJ March 15, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607.

<sup>241</sup> JB to TC September, 29, NARA, RG 92, Box 601.

<sup>242</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 4; *Army and Navy Chronicle* Vol III No. 3 July 21, 1836; Prince, *Storm of Bullets*, 61.

especially one with less than “friendly feelings” for the Major.<sup>243</sup> While Brant was transitioning between Montgomery and Tampa, he returned home in May 1837, and received orders to supply the newly formed 2nd Dragoon Regiment with 150 horses for use in Florida that following year.<sup>244</sup> Brant, perhaps seeing the exorbitant price of horses in the Southeast, sought to exploit the storage costs and prices for the animals. Hiring agents to make purchases, feed, and sell the Dragoon horses, Brant’s extended criminal network quickly came to the attention of his replacement Captain George H. Crosman. Crosman had been an Assistant Quartermaster since 1830 in various posts in the Midwest, and was assigned to St. Louis in 1837.<sup>245</sup> While Brant made infrequent visits to the city throughout 1837, Crosman received full responsibility as Deputy Quartermaster General. Within weeks of assuming the position he was alerted by friends, fellow-officers, and local gossip, to the peculiar activities of his predecessor. The Dragoon horses were, in particular, “a commonplace topic of conversation in this city,” Crosman later testified.<sup>246</sup> The Captain was not a friend of Brant’s. While his testimony fails to describe how the animosity developed between the two, he stated relations between “Major Brant and myself, although many years ago [were] friendly, for the last 3 or 4 years, have not been so.”<sup>247</sup> Armed with potential leads, and the

---

<sup>243</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 19

<sup>244</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 125-130; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A , Box 105, Appendix A.

<sup>245</sup> Heitman. *Historical Register*, 340.

Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 56-58, 63.

<sup>246</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 51.

<sup>247</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 65-66.



personal disdain for the potentially corrupt Major, Capt. Crosman began making “diligent inquiries in as quiet a manner as possible.”<sup>248</sup>

### **CROSMAN PULLS A THREAD: INVESTIGATION INTO BRANT’S SCHEMES**

As Crosman began his investigation in 1837, his discoveries can be placed into three major groupings of schemes: horses, depots, and supplies. The first grouping Crosman investigated was the purchase, sale, storage, and abuse of horses on Brant’s personal property just outside the city. Between 100-200 horses, many bearing the brand “USD” for use with the newly created 2nd Dragoon Regiment in Florida, were stored and starved on his insufficient acreage of pasture land.<sup>249</sup> The second set of schemes revolved around Brant’s ownership and rental of the two riverside depots. These storehouses emerged as an anomaly on Crosman’s ledgers due to their inconvenient placement and exorbitant rental pricing. Finally, Crosman investigated a series of scattered allegations that Brant utilized the resettlement of Seminoles and Creeks to his profit, at the expense of fellow officers in the Office of Indian Affairs. Combined, Crosman’s “diligent inquiries” served to established the foundation for the largest fraud-related court martial the army witnessed during the Second Seminole War.<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 20.

<sup>249</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 133.

<sup>250</sup> The author surveyed all Courts Martial the Army conducted between February 1836-July 1842 within the territory Florida, in Washington, or related to the Florida War. Within these confines, 313 Courts Martials were served. The case of Joshua Brant easily generated the largest amount of testimony, trumping even the more famous Court of Inquiry into the actions of Winfield Scott and his rival Edmund P. Gaines in 1836. It should be also noted that this was the only recorded case of the 313 analyzed that charged a Quartermaster for fraud during the 7 years of the war. Records of the Judge

Crosman's investigations began first with inquiries into the purchase of Dragoon horses, rumored to have been made by agents hired by Brant.<sup>251</sup> Crosman later testified that his first lead was his conversations with fellow officers and "gentlemen of high standing" who argued the actions bore "inequalities of Major Brant, as Quartermaster which are of a very serious character. It appears that horses for the Dragoon Service were purchased with private notes."<sup>252</sup> One agent, John Darnielle, was instructed by Brant to "receive from him in payment of said notes, horses, or oxen, or negroes or anything else that I could bring down to St. Louis and make the money on."<sup>253</sup> The agent purchased 5 horses, 2 oxen, and 1 mule then "sold" them to the government.<sup>254</sup> The sale overseen and approved by Brant, was recorded as two \$500 notes in the Quartermaster's ledger. Crosman sought Darnielle's explanation, believing the horse agent was a "respected" member of St. Louis society, and felt confident in his report that he was paid \$50 for his services buying and reselling the horses to Brant.<sup>255</sup> Crosman surmised that Brant had somehow induced Darnielle to sign off on the sales of horses before marking a specific price for the animals. This allowed Brant to purchase the animals at a much cheaper rate of \$75, depositing the remaining money into a private

---

Advocate General, Court Martial Case Files, NARA, RG 153, CC 143-DD 35, Box 86-115.

<sup>251</sup> Crosman testified that he was alerted to Brant's misconduct first by Col. E. L. Marsh. Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 66.

<sup>252</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 25-27. 63-64.

<sup>253</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 94.

<sup>254</sup> The animals were purchased from William Walker, a resident of Franklin Missouri. Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433 ½, Box 105, 25-26; 52.

<sup>255</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 25-28.

account, and taking ownership of the oxen and mule without ever utilizing his private funds.<sup>256</sup> Finally, Darnielle commented that Brant grew frustrated at his high purchasing prices because presumably Brant would not be able to deposit as much of the overhead as he anticipated. Darnielle later testified, “I add too, if it be necessary, that I thought he mistreated me.”<sup>257</sup> Yet, the purchases made by Darnielle were indicative of a much larger scheme regarding horses onto which Crosman had inadvertently stumbled.

Crosman’s inquiries into the storage of Dragoon horses in St. Louis yielded evidence of a six month long process of deliberately mistreating and reselling public horses at a dramatically raised rate, all of which benefited Brant. While investigating Darnielle’s sales, Crosman asked where the horses were supposed to be stored. The official returns stated they were stored on several properties surrounding the city. Darnielle, as well as popular rumor, suggested otherwise. The horses were stored and cared for on Brant’s private property.<sup>258</sup> Crosman interviewed Brant’s neighbors and former workers from the plantation, and quickly uncovered the disturbing treatment the horses underwent there. The property was poorly suited to storing the sheer volume of animals on it, according to John Kimball, a field hand on Brant’s land.<sup>259</sup> The initial 33 horses stored there in May of 1837 quickly ate the majority of pasture grass, and by June the fields were nearly barren. A neighbor, George Bissell, commented to Crosman, “I

---

<sup>256</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 66.

<sup>257</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 113.

<sup>258</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 128, 158-174.

<sup>259</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 174.

have often observed clouds of dust arising from the pasture...I have heard many a laugh, at the manner of faltering U.S. Horses.”<sup>260</sup> Throughout the summer the number of horses varied on the plantation from less than 100 to as many as 200 with the most broken or starving animals quietly being auctioned off with the assistance of John Darnielle.<sup>261</sup> To compensate for the lack of pasture, field hands purchased or brought in green corn to feed the animals. They gave the newer stronger animals more feed and less to the wasting older ones.<sup>262</sup> Green corn was dangerous to the animals’ health. As witnesses later testified, the corn was not even the most economic method of keeping the horses fed.<sup>263</sup> According to Kimball and Bissell, Brant and his staff were not frugal; rather, they were incompetent at best or negligent at worst in their care for the animals.<sup>264</sup>

If Brant was incompetent or negligent at caring for the public animals, he was certainly neither of those things when it came to profiting off them. Crosman, in his analysis of Brant’s returns, found that there were two main methods of generating income from the animals on his land. The first method was fraudulent accounts made by

---

<sup>260</sup>Brant attempted to discredit Bissell’s testimony at his court of inquiry claiming that Bissell had never stepped foot on Brant’s property, and that all misconduct was viewed from the adjacent land. However, clouds of dust and their implication of over-grazed fields are hard to mistake, even at a distance. Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 79, 81-84, 148.

<sup>261</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 166-174.

<sup>262</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 181-187, 296-301.

<sup>263</sup>Green corn used as feed increases rates of choking, and can cause colic and founder in horses. If Brant did not know this his workers charged with caring for the animals most certainly did; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 83-84, 130, 181-187.

<sup>264</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 142-153, 163-174.

workers who all staffed the plantation for one to two months from May to October 1837. John Kimball identified other men under his employ, who thought they were “employed in the public service” and testified to Brant telling them so.<sup>265</sup> Someone named William Dowler, for example, had allegedly kept some of the horses on his property. Upon investigation “no one knew of any man of that name who had kept horses hereabouts.”<sup>266</sup> Kimball, among others, admitted to signing blank receipts under Brant’s supervision. Another employee of Brant later commented that the receipts were “signed by Dowler blank; that is the items were not put in nor the amount in the receipt.”<sup>267</sup> This allowed Brant to set the price of wages, feed, and services rendered by his “publicly-employed” staff, a power he abused to the tune of several thousand dollars. Brant’s abuse of Richard Morgan, his slave “employed by the government” was a particularly despicable instance of fraud. Brant’s returns “conveyed the idea that he [Morgan] was a free man, and that the wages paid to him on account of the U.S. were for his sole use and benefit; whereas said wages were for the use and benefit of Lt. Col. Brant himself.”<sup>268</sup> Morgan was not manumitted for his efforts. Brant’s ability to manipulate the receipts from his plantation worked to drastically increase his profit beyond the wages of his employees and slaves.

---

<sup>265</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 88.

<sup>266</sup> Norman Dowler eventually testified for his brother during the Court of Inquiry and vouched for his taking care of the animals. It appears that William Dowler was under a similar agreement with Brant as Kimball and Darnielle; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 23, 79.

<sup>267</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 82.

<sup>268</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 868.

Brant's second method of profiting off of his horse fraud was overcharging the government for the purchase of feed and the animals themselves, often in "poor, miserable condition."<sup>269</sup> Brant's mistreatment of the animals was the key to generating further scrutiny into his operation. When Brant turned over the animals to Crosman in October 1837, as he was returning to Florida, their condition alarmed Crosman and gave him cause to put together an official board of officers to examine the animals.<sup>270</sup> The board of examination convened in late fall of 1837 and condemned the majority of the wasted animals as unfit for Dragoon service in Florida.<sup>271</sup>

Upon investigation of the animal's condition, Crosman interviewed the plantation workers regarding feed. The discussions unveiled an entire other angle to Brant's schemes. Brant, it seemed, was charging the government drastically more for the purchased feed, that was often old and decaying, and was only used when grass and green corn were not available.<sup>272</sup> The plantation charged the federal government \$3.00 per horse per week. Since the number of horses varied, Brant's profits did as well. For example, in July, Brant reported he stored 65 horses for Dragoon service, for \$3.00 a day totaling \$1,077.09. Crosman interviewed Captain Eaton regarding livery prices in the city for the same number of horses and found they could be stabled for as little as .50 cents per day, with shelter and fresh feed.<sup>273</sup> Like Darnielle's purchases, and the wages

---

<sup>269</sup>Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 15.

<sup>270</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 15.

<sup>271</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 30-31.

<sup>272</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 181.

<sup>273</sup>To confirm this, Crosman interviewed livery owners in the city and verified both the prices of Hay, Grain, and shelter for horses. All were dramatically lower than Brant's

of his workers, Brant skimmed overhead into his private accounts from grossly overpriced feed totaling roughly \$4,654 from the horse-related plantation schemes alone. Given that a Major's annual salary was between \$1,200-1,500 in 1837, Brant made a handsome profit of almost four times his yearly wages in less than six months from this scheme alone.<sup>274</sup> Crosman's investigations into Brant's misconduct were not just limited to the countryside around St. Louis; his illegal designs took root along the river banks as well.

While Brant was profiting off the horses wasting away on his plantation, he was collecting a 33% higher rent than the market value on storehouses he owned, hired by two separate sections of the War Department, the Quartermaster Department, and the Indian Department.<sup>275</sup> The opportunities of profiteering off the dual missions of supplying the army in removal operations, and aiding the resettlement of removed Indigenous peoples must have been appealing to someone with the appetite for quick money like Brant. As Crosman continued his investigations, he was alerted by a fellow

---

reported prices; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 152, 166-168, 187, 249.

<sup>274</sup> According to the official charges brought against Brant, he made a total sum of \$6,104. This number was found by adding all dollar amounts labeled in these charges. They are as follows: George McGunnele account \$48, \$24, William Dowler Account, \$549, \$975, Kimball Account, \$702, \$495, \$13, J.O. Bradshaw Account, \$1,077, Samuel Remmick (Brant's slave Alias Richard Morgan) Wages not listed, Seminole Accounts, \$417, \$367. Brant also requested two payments for the amounts of \$6,000 and \$4,000 under the name of J.P. Davis to George McGunnele in November of 1838. These were not paid by the federal government, they are not included in the total; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; For officer salaries in this era see: Skelton, *American Profession*, 190-199.

<sup>275</sup> The highest competitor rent that Crosman found was \$750 per annum, with the average rent falling closer to \$500 annually; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17, 306-329.

officer, Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock, acting as the Indian Department representative in St. Louis, that there were Indian Department goods stored in the warehouses at Second and Laurel.<sup>276</sup> Crosman was aware of the store houses as a warehouse for Quartermaster Department supplies, and was already suspicious of its \$1,000 annual rent.<sup>277</sup> When Crosman tried to rent from cheaper competitor storehouses, he was ordered by his superior, Brant, to cease his actions.<sup>278</sup> Crosman quietly made inquiries at the county courthouse and found that, not only did Brant own the storehouses, but the man allegedly the landlord, George K. McGunnege, was not formally renting the property from the Major.<sup>279</sup> Crosman later testified regarding the discoveries he made when combining ledgers with court records, “I believe it from the fact that...the official act [account], shows that a rent on the building was charged to the q.m. department and the cash book of the Indian Department in possession of Major Hitchcock exhibiting a charge for Indian goods stored in that building at the same time- both in the handwriting of Major Brant’s confidential clerk.”<sup>280</sup> Brant, for at least the year of 1837, collected annual payments amounting to \$2,000 in addition to the money he was making off of the fraudulent horse expenses. Crosman, with this damning evidence in hand, “asked if this was the fact, it was certainly wrong to charge a double rent on the same building...To

---

<sup>276</sup>Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A.

<sup>277</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 306-318.

<sup>278</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 320-329.

<sup>279</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 320-329.

<sup>280</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 37-39.



this he [Brant] made no satisfactory reply, only remarking that warehouses were scarce.”<sup>281</sup>

During the summer and fall of 1837, Brant engaged in other schemes, which were smaller in profit, but equally illegal. While stationed in Tampa from June to November 1838, Brant took charge of disbursing payments for the federal purchase of horses in the city to aid the war effort. Like Quartermasters before him in the Southeast, Brant issued receipts so the civilians or surrendered Seminoles could file claims for payment.<sup>282</sup> Brant arrived in time to oversee a major purchase of horses from a large body of Seminoles in Tampa awaiting removal to New Orleans. Brant purchased 80 horses from Seminoles, and the receipts he wrote amounted to \$784. Brant paid the Seminoles a paltry \$9.80 a head at a time when healthy horses were going for as much as \$300 a head in Southeastern states like Georgia and South Carolina.<sup>283</sup> If paying a fraction of the price for horses in Florida was not enough, Brant made duplicates of the receipts and brought them back to Missouri while he attended his Court of Inquiry. There, “knowing it to be false as a voucher” Brant disbursed funds for the duplicate receipts “signed” by Seminoles accepting the \$784 dollars and depositing it in his own accounts, effectively denying the Indigenous sellers what little they were owed.<sup>284</sup>

---

<sup>281</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 17.

<sup>282</sup>Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A.

<sup>283</sup> JL to TJ, January 28, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.; Horses sent to Garry’s Ferry by Lt John L’Engle August 9 to November 3 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 604.; L’Engle shipping manifests/complaining of ships in early 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.; CC to TC October 24, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; CC to TC October 25 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Requisitions of MM Clark & Col. Pierce from Savannah Fall 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 603.

<sup>284</sup>Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A.

While not nearly as heinous as denying payment to a group of people already unfairly persecuted by the government, Brant was involved in one more much smaller matter, this one involving two canoes. The watercraft were purchased on Kimball's account with the Quartermaster's Department in June of 1837 for \$6.50 a piece, and were allegedly purchased "for feeding dragoon horses."<sup>285</sup> Perhaps workers desired a quick passage to St. Louis from the waterfront of Brant's property, or perhaps Brant and his family simply desired a bit of water-based recreation on hot summer days. Whatever the case, it was clear to Crosman and the board of officers at Brant's court martial that two canoes offered no utility when it came to feeding horses. While the duplicate receipts and the minor expenses of canoes pale in comparison to the larger horse and storehouse schemes, they demonstrate the sheer arrogance of Brant as he committed offenses against man and animal alike. In culmination, Brant's actions demonstrate a single Quartermaster's abuse of the system and the corruption which could be generated by unchecked authority among army Quartermasters. The overwhelming amount of evidence Crosman uncovered in his six month investigation provided ample grounds to trigger a Court of Inquiry in October of 1838, which in turn provided significant evidence to bring about a formal court martial a year later in 1839.

---

<sup>285</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 867.

## **THE BEST LAID PLANS: THE CASE OF JOSHUA B. BRANT**

On Monday December 3rd, 1838, after seven months of trial, Brant's Court of Inquiry reconvened again in their court room. Brant called Crosman as a witness for examination.<sup>286</sup> Brant's questioning went on for several minutes before, in a particularly heated exchange he asked, "State whether you have on several occasions declared that you would establish charges against Col. Brant which ought to cause his dismissal from the service?" Crosman's reply echoed his personal disdain for the man, but remained within the bounds of court proceedings. He responded, "I have repeatedly declared that I thought I should be able to establish the accusations now undergoing accusation; and perhaps others of equal importance. I think if proved he [Brant] ought to be compelled to leave the army."<sup>287</sup> During 1838 and 1839, these two men engaged in a bitter courtroom battle. Crosman utilized his large amounts of damning evidence to bring as many charges as legally possible against his rival, and Brant tried his hardest to cast his opponent as a conniving, spiteful man, jealous of Brant's rank and station. The truth of the matter, however, is revealed in the sheer number of witnesses and consistency of testimony given during the Court of Inquiry and Court Martial. Try as Brant might to discredit Crosman, Kimball, and Bissell, more and more witnesses came forth to back Crosman's allegations. The sheer number of testimonies, (totaling over 2,000 pages between the cases) and the evidence presented to the court (over 65 individual articles)

---

<sup>286</sup> Military Courts of Inquiry in this era allowed the officers under investigation to call witnesses and question them personally. Courts Martial functioned more as a traditional criminal court case with defense and prosecution.

<sup>287</sup>Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 64-66.

and the numerous appendixes weighed heavily against Brant's flimsy defense.<sup>288</sup> In 1839, the court found him guilty on all counts and sentenced Brant to be cashiered from the army. The wayward officer resigned in response, avoiding the sentence entirely.<sup>289</sup> The years of court deliberations and defense provide much insight into how the truth of Brant's numerous schemes came to light.

The Court of Inquiry began in October 1838, nearly a year after Crosman's initial inquiries into Brant's conduct and the more candid, less formal nature of the testimonies provide the best window into how exactly the case was seen and discussed by officers and witnesses alike. Throughout the proceedings the accuser, accused, and court were allowed to examine and cross examine witnesses at will. Thus, the testimony of the case resembles more of a frank discussion of Brant's actions—with Brant's own opinions thrown in—than a formal court case. Witnesses like Kimball and Bissell were often placed on the defensive, answering both for their actions in regards to Brant's schemes, but also for their personal character.<sup>290</sup> Kimball was caught in such a predicament when discussing his agreement to purchase grain for Brant. The court asked him "did you not state w/ Capt. Crosman that an agreement of this kind was made by you with Major Brant?" Kimball replied, hastily "I don't think I did make such a statement to Capt. Crosman; if I did, I don't know what I was thinking about, for no such agreement was

---

<sup>288</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105; Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105.

<sup>289</sup> There is no evidence that Brant was compelled legally to repay the Federal Government, nor the Seminole Nation. Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, 385.

<sup>290</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 53, 69-70, 79-81, 84-88, 94-106, 148-152.

ever made between Major Brant and me.”<sup>291</sup> While the mistake did not fundamentally discredit Kimball’s testimony, Brant no doubt relished the contradictions. However, for each small win in Brant’s defense, Crosman was able to call more witnesses from the city to shore up his accusations. Namely these witnesses were livery, storehouse, and grain market owners who verified not only the market value of their commodities, but the odd nature of Brant’s activities as a Quartermaster in the city.<sup>292</sup> Much of the testimony and information they provided the court was directly carried over into the Court Martial the following year. However, the animosity between Brant and Crosman often threatened to derail the trial entirely, no doubt a strategy Brant willfully employed to his advantage.

Crosman and Brant’s rivalry was a major feature of the Court of Inquiry and acted as Brant’s primary means of defense in both cases brought against him. Brant wrote in his initial statement to the court in October of 1838: “For the last three years I have been the object of unceasing and embarrassing attacks which were made with the intention of destroying my reputation and character as an officer and a man of honor, by charging me with having conducted a long series of petty speculations for which even abject poverty, could not furnish an excuse and which even the lowest and most degraded of our community would hesitate about perpetuating.”<sup>293</sup> Clearly a slight aimed at Crosman, Brant did not hesitate in framing his rival in the most negative light

---

<sup>291</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 172.

<sup>292</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 23-24, 32, 99-113, 130, 141-148, 152, 162, 181, 329-349.

<sup>293</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 5.

possible. During questioning, Brant even brought up the possibility of a conspiracy designed by Crosman to assume his position. Brant asserted, “State whether you were not serious of being permanently stationed at St. Louis in the q masters department, and whether you did or did not vision Major Brant an impediment to so being?” Crosman responded coolly, “I never had such a thought, that Major Brant was the impediment to my being stationed here; well knowing that there were other officers of rank between us, whose right it would be to occupy this station before me.”<sup>294</sup> That Brant’s major defense was to discredit Crosman worked against him at nearly every turn, the evidence Crosman brought to bear was simply too overwhelming, personal animosity or not. As a result the Court’s opinion in September 1838 called for a formal Court Martial against Brant.<sup>295</sup>

Brant’s Court Martial, despite being a near identical rehash of the Court of Inquiry drew significant attention from the Army's senior staff as well as local media.<sup>296</sup> The massive amount of evidence revealed by the Court of Inquiry justified a court of officers matched only by the much more highly publicized investigation into Scott and Gaines’s misconduct in Florida in 1836. Yet, for the immense professional scrutiny of

---

<sup>294</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 57.

<sup>295</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433½, Box 105, 871-877.

<sup>296</sup> An Op-Ed railing against Brant’s corruption appeared in the *Missouri Republican* authored by an anonymous author calling himself “Vindicator” in June of 1837 as the Court of Inquiry commenced. Brant CTM, NARA, RG153, Articles 37, 48.; The Court was comprised of officers as follows: Bvt. Brig. Gen. John Wool, Bvt. Bring Genl. Walker Armistead, Bvt. Col. John Walbach, Col. George Crogham, Bvt. Col. William Foster, Col. Thomas Cross, Maj. Henry Graig, Maj. Michael Payne, Maj. Bache, Bvt. Maj. Levi Whiting, Maj. John Taylor, Capt. D.H. Vinton, Capt. William Hart; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A , Box 105, 1-2, Articles 47-49.

the case, the Court Martial played out similarly to the Court of Inquiry. The charges brought against Brant fell in three categories, fraud against the government, neglect of duty, and conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman. The fraud charges were divided into 14 specifications, each outlining, almost verbatim, the initial letter Crosman sent to Secretary of War Robert Jones spurring the initial Court of Inquiry. The only additions were the profiteering charges against the Seminoles and the canoe matter uncovered during the first case.<sup>297</sup> Crosman again presented the fruits of his investigation, witnesses were brought before the court and hundreds of pages of testimony were spent determining the price of corn in 1837, and whether or not Brant's actions constituted malpractice.<sup>298</sup> The primary difference was the absence of Brant's defamation defense. Brant watched the case spiral further out of his favor. In October of 1839, nearly a year after the trial began the court rendered its decision--guilty on all counts. Crosman's diligent inquiries, it seemed, paid off.

Because he was guilty of the largest fraud against the American government during the Second Seminole War, the court dealt Brant a unique punishment given the severity of offense. The court ordered in addition to being cashiered from the army, "the crime, name and place of abode of the delinquent be published in the newspapers in and about the camp and particular state from which the offender came or where he usually resides."<sup>299</sup> A punishment targeted at an officer's reputation and personal honor was a

---

<sup>297</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, Appendix A.

<sup>298</sup> There were 45 Individual witnesses called in total for Brant's case, many being called several times to the stand; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A , Box 105, Index.

<sup>299</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A, Box 105, 383.

devastating blow. Historian Lorien Foote has defined honor among nineteenth-century officers as “when a man’s self-worth is based on public reputation and the respect of others.”<sup>300</sup> Attacks on one’s manly honor often resulted in duels, canings, or fights, thus the systematic dismantling of a Lt. Col’s reputation would not be a small punishment by any measure. It is unclear if this punishment by defamation was in response to Brant’s attempts at destroying the character of Crosman, or simply ruled an appropriate response to the sheer size of Brant’s offenses. Brant, after his resignation, sold the storehouses on Second and Laurel as well as the majority of his property outside the city.<sup>301</sup> Brant remained in the St. Louis area for the remainder of his life, yet could not stay out of the courts. In 1860, Brant was before the Missouri Supreme Court over a land dispute, but he died in 1861, before the conclusion of the case.<sup>302</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The case of Joshua Brant presents a comprehensive list of ways an army Quartermaster could abuse his rank, position, and responsibilities to his benefit during Jacksonian Indian Removal. Between May 1837-January 1838, Brant illegally acquired \$6,104.<sup>303</sup> The wayward Quartermaster did so, not by some grand heist, but rather a

---

<sup>300</sup> Lorien Foote, *Gentleman and the Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2010) 5-6.

<sup>301</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433 ½, Box 105, 133. Brant sold his land for \$250,000.

<sup>302</sup> Brant and Grantham were in dispute over the appointment of a trustee to land owned by the aging Brant. *Joshua B. Brant v. Taliaferro P. Grantham*, St. Charles County Historical Society 1860, Group C, Box 16, Folder 168.

<sup>303</sup> According to the official charges brought against Brant, he made a total sum of \$6,104. This number was found by adding all dollar amounts labeled in these charges.



series of “petty” schemes of “trivial” expense to the Quartermaster Department.<sup>304</sup>

These numerous schemes provide detailed blueprints for analyzing both military and civilian purchases in that era that may have been “in disregard to the interests of the United States.”<sup>305</sup> Elements of Brant’s plots, especially the duplicate receipts and fake expense returns, were scattered amidst the wanton spending that occurred both in and outside of the theater of the Second Seminole War. However, few known fraudulent claims made against the government had the sheer scale and cost that Brant’s did. His many plots offer a cautionary tale regarding the abuse of power and rank that could occur in modern contexts as easily as they fit in the 1830s. Profiteering, fraud, and corruption are hardly isolated occurrences throughout history, despite their lack of academic coverage within the antebellum era.

Brant’s horse and storehouse schemes demonstrate the ease with which officers of the immensely overstretched and overtaxed American Army could eschew professionalism in favor of personal gain. Brant was not the only Major, or high-ranking officer, holding a Quartermaster General position in a city stationed far from Washington City.<sup>306</sup> He was, however, the only officer of rank to get caught committing

---

They are as follows: George McGunnegle account \$48, \$24, William Dowler Account, \$549, \$975, Kimball Account, \$702, \$495, \$13, J.O. Bradshaw Account, \$1,077, Richard Morgan (Brant’s slave) Wages not listed, Seminole Accounts, \$417, \$367. Brant also requested two payments for the amounts of \$6,000 and \$4,000 under the name of J.P. Davis to George McGunnegle in November of 1838. These were not paid, they are not included in the total; Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A , Box 105, Appendix A; Skelton, *American Profession*, 190-199.

<sup>304</sup> Brant CTI, NARA, RG 153, CC 433 ½ , Box 105, 5.

<sup>305</sup> Brant CTM, NARA, RG 153, CC 437A , Box 105, Appendix A

<sup>306</sup> Isaac Clark Held a similar position in his home city of New Orleans, however, unlike Brant, Clark held nothing but disdain for the responsibilities of the job. IC to TJ

such a fraud on such a large scale. Many of the other Quartermasters were both far younger and more junior to superiors stationed in cities in the Southeast. Because of the excess autonomy granted to Quartermasters supplying the war effort in Florida, there was little chance for repercussion. Indeed, it seems his rival George Crosman was the only man willing to press such ludicrous sounding charges against the long time Quartermaster of the city. Brant, after all, had both a staff and fellow ranking officers in the city able to access his ledgers, yet few questioned him until after Crosman began his investigations. This begs the question: how many similar schemes may have taken place without the benefit of a determined investigator hunting down clues? The numerous claims rejected by the Treasury Department hints at an answer.

The Third Auditor of the United States Treasury department was responsible for reviewing every claim made against the government by civilians during the Second Seminole War, and from 1837-1851 he was quite busy. The majority of claims, of which there were thousands ranging from minor expenses to the purchases of steamboats, the office accepted with little comment. The majority of civilian claims filed against the government were relatively small expenses, a horse here, a dozen bales of hay there, most of which were purchased personally or by order of a regular Quartermaster in the nearby region. These claims often carried this Quartermaster's

---

February 7, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607. IC to TJ April 11, 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; FN to TJ April 25. 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 607; All officers assigned Quartermaster positions were promoted at least once during the course of the Second Seminole War. However, only a handful rose above the rank of Captain. Fewer still operated in isolation like Brant.

signature of endorsement.<sup>307</sup> It was in the gray area of militia Quartermasters that expense tended to inflate under murky auspicious.

The Third Auditor Peter Hagner contacted Quartermasters of the various Southeastern militia units several times to answer for their egregious expenses during the 1836-1837 campaigns.<sup>308</sup> The majority of these expenses were for overpriced horses, hotels, and food. In particular, purchases of tailored suits and alcohol tended to flag returns as fraudulent.<sup>309</sup> Similarly, Hagner investigated cases where Volunteer Quartermasters bought goods from relatives at steep rates.<sup>310</sup> These expenses were brought into question and when found fraudulent the state was required to pay back expenses due to the difficulty of soliciting individuals. Compounding problems with collecting was the defense of such claims by Governors like Richard Keith Call, who defended the actions of volunteer Quartermasters.<sup>311</sup> Again the urgency of campaigns and incompetence of commanders in the field to anticipate the needs of their troops was the primary driver of militia expenses during the war. However, the methods of abuse by volunteer Quartermasters, whether intentional or otherwise, suggest that the Second

---

<sup>307</sup> A review of claims filed against the Quartermaster Department showed that many purchases from individual civilians seemed to be in good order. Price gouging was not an illegal activity; thus, the Third Auditor generally approved most transactions even if the pricing was exorbitant. Florida Claims, 1836-1840, NARA, RG92, Box 602; Florida Militia Claims 1841, NARA, RG 92, Box 603; Florida Militia Special Claims 1841-1844, NARA, RG 92, Box 604; Florida War Claims, NARA, RG 92, Box 606.

<sup>308</sup> Florida War Claims, NARA, Box 606.

<sup>309</sup> Report of the Third Auditor upon Sundry Claims for Forage purchased by Territorial Qr. Master John Saw for the use of Militia whose services were assumed by the United States, August 22, 1842, NARA, RG 92, Box 607

<sup>310</sup> Florida War Claims, NARA, RG 92, Box 606.

<sup>311</sup> RKC to Lewis Cass, May 1836, NARA, RG 92, Box 602.

Seminole War provided both opportunity, urgency, and credit to facilitate the ballooning of expense Hagner spent over a decade sifting through.

Brant's schemes were easily the largest documented attempt at exploiting the loose restrictions on Army spending during the Second Seminole War, but his methods could easily be recreated. The combination of authority, location, and unsupervised spending is a combination easily found through both American and foreign conflict throughout history. Scholarly literature has remained decidedly quiet on the consequences of corruption in the supply of armies, particularly in the context of the nineteenth century.<sup>312</sup> This chapter has provided an example of exactly how fruitful further analysis into the investigation and prosecution of such cases can be to bettering the understanding of the functions of the American Army and its Quartermaster Department.

---

<sup>312</sup> Hess's *Civil War Logistics*, easily the most detailed scholarly history written on logistics in the 19th century, explicitly avoids discussing Supply of the Union Army. He chooses instead to focus his highly detailed efforts on Transportation. xi-xv.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

Logistics during the Second Seminole War was characterized by several factors: incompetence, wastefulness, and abuse, but also adaptability and independence. While the initial campaigns of the Second Seminole War were commanded by leaders who routinely overestimated the capabilities of their soldiers, the animals that carried them, and their supply lines, those lines eventually formed into reliable methods of delivering goods to a war fought in some of the harshest and most remote landscapes eastern North America had to offer. In order to campaign in such environments, the cost of the conflict quickly inflated as commanders like Richard Keith Call put faith in an extravagantly expensive cavalry campaign despite its disadvantages. The credit lines required to supply armies in such terrain created the conditions for rampant abuse among Quartermasters in cities tasked with supplying the army. When the opportunity presented itself in St. Louis, these factors created a massive instance of fraud perpetrated by a single officer in less than a year. The failures of the early campaigns of the war and the numerous fraud schemes perpetuated by Joshua Brant serve to illustrate the scope of oversights committed by commanding officers and the federal government during the first years of the Florida War. Despite the massive problems with acquisitions and supply, the isolated, overworked Quartermasters in Florida and other Southeastern states still managed to meet and often exceed the expectations placed on them by the theater commanders during the Second Seminole War.

The early campaigns of the Second Seminole War from 1836-1837 demonstrated the immense importance of understanding the terrain before pursuing enemies through it. While Clinch, Gaines, Call, and to a lesser extent Scott, attempted to achieve a fast, flexible, offensive against Osceola's band, none actually did so. The key factors stopping each successive attempt was first and foremost skillful exploitation of the terrain by Indigenous warriors. Wherever the opposing forces met in this early stage of the war, there was a hammock, swamp, or river between them. These features allowed the Seminoles to maintain initiative in choosing the ground and timing of nearly every major battle fought from 1835 to 1837.

The second major factor behind the succession of failed campaigns was the overestimation of the efficiency of early supply lines into the territory. While the beleaguered Quartermasters eventually were able to meet the constant, and varying, demands of the commanders, it was not without months of poor wagon-horse conditions, too few wagons, and incredibly high market prices. The result was the initial belief among commanders like Gaines and Call that they could move beyond their supplies and that it would catch up to their forces with enough forage and rations to sustain the overextended armies. This was a reality that never materialized during the Second Seminole War.

The final factor was misapplication and overreliance on horse power during the early campaigns. As Col. Henry Stanton laboriously pointed out in 1841, horses were extravagantly wasteful to the campaigns in Florida. There were no grazing pastures for them, there were seldom open fields to maneuver with them, and when Seminoles

presented themselves to fight it was usually behind a swamp that forced horse-borne units to dismount before attacking. Horses died by the hundreds of starvation, sickness, rotted hooves, and environmental hazards. Yet, commanders like Richard Keith Call refused to adopt new strategies, believing that a lightning cavalry strike extended beyond his supply lines could bring swift victory over an opponent that had better command of the land than he.

Historians have overlooked the actions of officers tasked with supplying the many horse-borne misadventures of the army. As news of the destruction of Dade's detachment reached major media outlets, the junior officers stationed in Southeastern cities acted of their own volition setting up the initial framework of the transportation infrastructure that sustained armies in the war. From purchasing entire stocks of horses to chartering egregiously priced steam boats, these Quartermasters were on the forefront of the supply lines allowing the campaigns of Scott, Gaines, and Call, to materialize in a coherent fashion. Equally as important as supplying the regular army, Quartermasters also supplied the Volunteer units who eagerly mustered in larger numbers than expected to travel south and fight. These units, in particular the mounted ones, generated both animosity and expenses once in theater due to the drastically high rates of mortality among their federally provided animals. These costs help address much of the mystery behind the explosion of expenses during the war.

As Mahon argued in 1985, no academic has taken on the challenge of explaining the 30-40 million dollar price tag of the war.<sup>313</sup> While this study does not purport to

---

<sup>313</sup> Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 326.

answer that question fully, the analysis of the credit increases during the first years of the war, particularly during the Call campaign, suggests two focal points for analyzing spending during the conflict. The first is the mentality of theater commanders, who misunderstood costs and overestimated transport efficiency and ease of supply acquisition. Scott's hoarding of supplies in Jacksonville and Picolata as well as Call's inability to issue requests in a timely fashion both reflect different but equally flawed ways theater commanders understood the logistical problems of campaigning in Florida.

The second angle of approach is studying the documents of the Quartermasters themselves, including those stationed some distance from the conflict. The letters of Michael Clark, Charles Collins, and John L'Engle all provide a vivid window into the intersection of civilian and military economies, and the prices attached to critical items for the war effort. Horses, forage, rations, and reliable transportation, all provided a weekly, if not daily, struggle for these Quartermasters and furnishes new insight into the state of the local and the national economy on the eve of the Panic of 1837. The ways in which Southeastern Quartermasters interacted with banks, merchants, and their department office in Washington City help to illustrate the escalation of credit over cash in these interactions and how the orders of one theater commander, Call, shaped the spending habits of the entire army. While Quartermasters under Call's command spared no expense and the supply lines solidified, civilian and military opportunists eagerly took advantage of the situation.

The case of Joshua Brant was the culmination of the exploitation of massive federal spending in the Southeast. With permissions for spending increasing and



thresholds of credit rising well above normal rates without seeming to raise suspicion, Brant utilized rank, distance from formal supervision, and local connections to formulate an infrastructure of corruption in St. Louis from 1836-1838. The charges brought against him group around three types of fraud schemes: horse-related, storehouse rent, and smaller schemes with worker wages. Taken together, Brant's case demonstrates how a series of small earning schemes net a far larger profit over time. Brant's schemes occurred in a timeframe where the economy was shaky, officers were not paid well, and rank came with significant privileges given the scarcity of officers. It was, in many ways, a perfect set of opportunities. Without the chance appointment of Brant's rival, Crosman, to the city, his schemes may have gone undetected.

From a historical perspective Brant's schemes serve as a blueprint to analyze potentially understudied and undetected corruption within the era of Indian removal as well as in other major conflicts. Brant's utilization of false and blank receipts, double booked storage spaces, and gross overcharging for wasted horses, are all activities the Treasury Department looked into during its investigation into civilian claims levied against the government in the name of supplying the Second Seminole War, a relatively insignificant conflict.<sup>314</sup> If such analysis can be applied to larger conflicts such as the

---

<sup>314</sup> While the Second Seminole War was economically and militarily insignificant compared to future conflicts the regular Army would face, it is still important to acknowledge the severity of the conflict from the Seminole perspective. The Seminoles were fighting for their survival against invaders bent on removing them from their land, stealing their cattle, and re-enslaving their maroon allies and slaves. Throughout the whole conflict the Seminole population of Florida was reduce from 5,000 to 300 in seven years, the impact of the fighting on their society and culture can hardly be calculated in figures like expenses and casualties.

War of 1812, US-Mexican War, or the American Civil War, new and perhaps significant information about the acquisition and abuse of supply in the Quartermaster Department may be uncovered.

The Quartermaster Department's efforts during the Second Seminole War, as this study has shown, was often fatally taken for granted as campaign after campaign lived and died on the efficiency or overestimation of supply lines. The Department's efforts reflect an immense amount of trust placed in a small body of junior officers, and surprisingly, that trust was betrayed by one of the more senior rather than junior officers in the Department. This study has shown the rich depth to logistical sources that reveal not only compelling evidence of major inefficiencies within the American Army, but also provide richness to the characters of the Quartermasters themselves. An analysis of logistics, with attention paid to the Quartermaster's efforts in facilitating, and sometimes exploiting, supply and transportation of items necessary for campaigns, offers historians a new and clearer vision of operational events. This vision can and should be applied to larger conflicts that historians have mistakenly thought thoroughly canvassed by military historians and scholars of the nineteenth-century.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### *Manuscripts:*

United States National Archives and Records Administration  
RG 92 Records of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File  
1794-1915 Boxes 601-607.  
RG 153 CC437 Records of the Judge Advocate General.

Library of Congress  
Thomas Sidney Jesup Papers, General Correspondence 1780-1907 Boxes 5-6.  
Robert Anderson Papers, Box 2, 1836-1839

Florida Historical Society  
Louis Fleming Manuscript, Florida Historical Society

#### *Published:*

*Army and Navy Chronicle* Vol III.  
Congressional Serial Set Senate Document 224  
*Niles Weekly Register*  
Bemrose, John. *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966.  
McCall, George A. *Letters from the Frontiers*. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1974.  
Prince, Henry. *Amidst a Storm of Bullets: The Diary of Lt. Henry Prince in Florida 1836-1842*. Tampa: University of Florida Press, 2008.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Belko, William S. ed. *America's Hundred Years War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011.  
Bowler, Arthur. "Logistics and Operations in the American Revolution." Ed. Higginbotham, Don. *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays*. Santa Barbara: Praeger Press, 1978.  
Campbell, John. "The Seminoles, The "Bloodhound War," and Abolitionism, 1796-1865." *Journal Of Southern History* 72, no. 2: 2. Hanover, Pennsylvania: Sheridan Press.  
Clark Shire, Laurie. *The Threshold of Manifest Destiny Gender and National Expansion*

- in *Florida*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Coppee, Henry. *Field Manual of Courts-martial, Containing the Forms and Proceeding, of All Kinds of Courts-marital, and an Explanation of the Duties of all Persons Connected with Military Tribunals, In Any Capacity*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1863.
- Covington, James W. *The Seminoles of Florida*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993.
- Cusick, James G. *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.
- Doherty Jr. Herbert J. *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961.
- Downes, Alexander B. "Draining the Sea by Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 9, No. 4. New York, New York: ABC-Clio Press, 2007.
- Edelstein, David M. "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 1. Summer 2004, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004. 49-91.
- Ellisor, John T. *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010.
- Engles, Donald W. *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.
- Fairbanks, Charles H. "Ethno-Archaeology of the Florida Seminole" Milanich, T. Jerald, and Proctor, Samuel eds. *Tacachale: Essays On the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia During the Historic Period*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1978.
- Frank, Andrew K. "Creating a Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida." *Florida State University Law Review*. vol.9 no. 2. (Miami: Florida International University Press, 2013).
- Grenier, John. *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Haveman, Christopher D. *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, & Ethnic Cleansing in the American South*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010.
- Heitman, Francis Bernard. *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903. Vol. 1*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965.
- Hess, Earl J. *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Knetsch, Joe. *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier: Articles on the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*. Dade City, Florida: Seminole Wars Foundation Press, 2008.
- Laumer, Frank. *Dade's Last Command*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.
- Lee, Wayne E. *Barbarians and Brothers; Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865*. New

- York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Mahon, John K. *History of the Second Seminole War*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1967. Revised Ed. 1985.
- Micco, Melinda. "Blood and Money: The Case of Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Indians in Oklahoma" Miles, Tiya, and Sharon Patricia Holland. eds. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Missall, John, and Mary. *The Seminole wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press. 2004.
- Moten, Michael. eds. *Between War and Peace: How America Ends its Wars*. New York: Free Press 2011.
- Mulroy, Kevin. "Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Seminole Maroons." *Journal of World History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.
- Peters, Virginia Bergman. *The Florida Wars*. New York: Shoe String Press Inc, 1979.
- Petersen, William J. *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*. Iowa City, Iowa: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1968.
- Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1968.
- Rembert W. Patrick, *Aristocrat in Uniform: General Duncan L. Clinch*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963.
- Risch, Erna. *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775-1939*. Washington, DC: Quartermaster Historian's Office, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1962.
- Silverman, David. *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Transformation of Native America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Skelton, William B. *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps 1784-1861*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992.
- Spring, Matthew H. "With Zeal and With Bayonets Only." *The British Army on Campaign in North America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
- Swanton, John Reed. *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*. Vol. 73. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1922;
- Syrett, David. *Shipping and the American War 1775-1783: A Study of British Transport Organization*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- United States, Department of the Navy, *MCDP 4 Logistics*, Washington DC: Department of the Navy, 1997.
- Utley, Robert Marshall. *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865*. University of Nebraska Press, 1967. Reprinted 1981.
- Waddell, Steve R. *United States Army Logistics: From American Revolution to 9/11*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO Press, 2010.
- Watson, Samuel J. *Jackson's Sword: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1810-1821*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012.
- Watson, Samuel J. *Peacekeepers and Conquerors: The Army Officer Corps on the*

- American Frontier, 1821-1846*. University Press of Kansas, 2013.
- Weber, David J. *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Weigley, Russell Frank. *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.
- Weisman, Brent Richards. *Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989.
- Wright, James Leitch. *Creeks & Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986.
- Young, Mary E. *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, rev. ed. 2002.